

## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

*BASP* 35:1-2 is a special thematic issue, devoted to the publication of papers from a panel at the April 1997 Annual Meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. This panel, "House, Church and Monastery: Coptic Uses of Space from Late Antiquity to the Present Day," was organized by Sheila McNally and moderated by Thelma K. Thomas. Given the great interest in Late Antique Egypt at the University of Michigan, the venue proved highly appropriate. Papers on any aspect of Egypt in Late Antiquity are rare enough at ARCE meetings to warrant interest, but the high quality and thematic unity of the papers in this panel prompted special attention. Taken together, the papers address issues that are of great general interest to the readership of *BASP*, so the publication of these papers in the pages of *BASP* as a group seems most appropriate. The present issue also includes book reviews unrelated to the thematic papers, and the following issue will return to the more usual mixture of text editions, notes, synthetic articles and reviews on a variety of papyrological topics.

Special thematic issues of *BASP* have appeared sporadically throughout its history, the most recent being *BASP* 26:3-4 (1989, "Comparative Approaches to the Social History of Roman Egypt") and the second half of *BASP* 27:1-4 (1990, "Studies in Late Antiquity"). Proposals for further thematic issues should be communicated to the editors at the editorial address on the inside front cover.

The editors would like to thank Thelma K. Thomas for acting as guest editor, for bringing together these papers and for providing an introduction that puts them firmly into the context of past volumes of *BASP*. We would also like to thank Sheila McNally for her original efforts in organizing the panel and for her contribution, and Elizabeth Bolman, Rebecca Krawiec and Helen Saradi for their articles. Robin Meador-Woodruff, Kelsey Museum Registrar and Associate Curator of Slides and Photographs, provided useful

assistance with the illustrations for this issue, for which we are grateful. Finally, as always, we would like to thank the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan and its director Sharon Herbert for the ongoing support afforded to the editing, preparation and production of *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*.

THE EDITORS

Terry Wilfong

Timothy Renner

John Whitehorne

## *Topoi*: Investigations into Some Social and Spiritual Geographies of Post-Pharaonic Egypt

The initial impetus for this compilation of essays came in the fall of 1996 during the Byzantine Studies Conference when Sheila McNally suggested that we do something about "space" for the upcoming annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt. Although, I admit, I was wary of the risk of losing direction in such an apparently nebulous subject, I was also struck by the potential contributions of studies focused on the social production of space as a lightning rod for long-standing, yet still urgent, questions about cultural interactions in Egypt's richly complex post-pharaonic history. The session, as organized by Professor McNally, was an artful series of investigations into constructions of what have been called cultural geographies.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in anticipation of this common focus, the session drew an overflowing audience more diverse than our slate of speakers who themselves represented the disciplines of philology, archaeology, history, and art history and a chronological spectrum from the late Roman period up to the present day.<sup>2</sup> The question and answer session was

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, P. Jackson, *Maps of Meaning. An Introduction to Cultural Geography* (London 1989); K. E. Foote, et al., *Re-Reading Cultural Geography* (Austin TX 1994); P. Wagner and M. Mikesell, *Readings in Cultural Geography* (Chicago 1962). For examples of successful studies focused on Graeco-Roman antiquity, see D. J. Mattingly, "Understanding Roman Landscapes," *JRA* 6 (1993) 359-66; S. E. Alcock, "Roman Imperialism in the Greek Landscape," *JRA* 2 (1989) 5-34; S. E. Alcock, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Although not included in this collection, a fifth paper, "Return to the Desert: The New Role of Egyptian Monasteries in the Construction of Coptic Christian Identity" by Elizabeth Oram of Princeton University, was very useful for its insistence on modern contexts and context-

thoroughly engaged and decidedly lively. As moderator I was both delighted and frustrated that discussion was cut off only for lack of time. Now, as editor of the current collection of articles based upon those papers, I hope to renew discussion within the more focused arena of the *Bulletin for the American Society of Papyrologists*.

"Why *BASP*," you may ask, "for a collection of articles whose subjects require the study of evidence other than the papyrological?" My initial response directs you to the need for cross-disciplinary exchanges as noted more than once recently in *BASP* in articles intent upon re-defining the place of papyrology within a larger intellectual enterprise, including complementary categories of evidence, alternative methodological models, and issues important to other disciplines.<sup>3</sup> Such articles written over the past decade have drawn our attention to the traditional separation of disciplines that has left each discipline with its own distinct historiographical legacy of near-canonical issues—although categories of evidence are not impermeable—and made clear that we have reached the end of the era of papyrological studies conducted in isolation. By way of simplistic yet apt examples, papyrologists are no longer habitually focused on things Greek while scarcely noticing developments in Coptic language and literature,<sup>4</sup> nor myopically concerned only with clean and objective topics like law and economics to the exclusion of more messily subjective, experiential arenas of the courtroom and the household,<sup>5</sup> nor do such

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ualizations of historical topics. See also M. Golden and P. Toohey, eds. *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization and the Ancient World* (London 1997).

<sup>3</sup> B. W. Frier, "A New Papyrology?" *BASP* 26 (1989) 217-226. J. G. Keenan, "Papyrology and Byzantine Historiography," *BASP* 30 (1993) 137-145 in an issue entitled *Comparative Approaches to the Social History of Roman Egypt*. See also R. S. Bagnall, "Archaeology and Papyrology," *JRA* 1 (1988) 197-202; and B. Hitchner, "The Merits and Challenges of an *Annaliste* Approach to Archaeology," *JRA* 7 (1994) 408-17.

<sup>4</sup> P. van Minnen, "The Century of Papyrology (1892-1992)" *BASP* 30 (1993) 5-18.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., T. Gagos and P. van Minnen, *Settling a Dispute: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor 1994); and R. S.



apparently empirical considerations as word origin, paleography, onomastics, text corruptions and recensions preclude interpretation.<sup>6</sup> In short, papyrologists now recognize and treat texts as artifacts, and seek to equip themselves to grasp the implications and circumstances of human agency. Similarly, most historians of material remains are no longer content with visual analyses conducted without benefit of informed reading of primary sources and archaeological contexts.<sup>7</sup>

In the above-mentioned *BASP* articles, it is the papyrological perspective that acknowledges the existence and potential usefulness of related areas of study.<sup>8</sup> The present collection proposes to continue cross-disciplinary discussions by contributing perspectives from outside of papyrology and indicating a potentially fruitful area of interest to papyrologists.

### **Topos: Place and Space**

The common denominator for these articles is, as it turns out, place as much as space. The societal production of space has

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Bagnall and B. W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (Cambridge 1994).

<sup>6</sup> For a fascinating example, see J. Kramer, "Was bedeutet *koimeterion* im den Papyri?" *ZPE* 80 (1990) 269-72, which, interestingly, does not cite or consider known cemeteries.

<sup>7</sup> See, for examples of well-rounded studies of textiles, A. Gonosova, "Textiles," in F. Friedman, *Beyond the Pharaohs. Egypt and the Copts, 2-7th Centuries AD* (Providence RI 1989) and A. Stauffer, *Spätantike und koptische Wirkereien* (Bern 1991) which rely to a great extent on papyrological studies, e.g. E. Wipszycka, *L'Industrie textile dans l'égypte romaine* (Warsaw 1965); P. van Minnen, "Urban Craftsmen in Roman Egypt," *Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelgeschichte* 6 (1986) 31-88.

<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, they do so in a manner recognizable to non-papyrologists. My own entry to papyrology over a decade ago was like Alice's adventures through the looking-glass in that the further I went, the curiously it got: solipsistic referencing and impenetrable titles (see last citation in footnote 13) seemed to be conspiring to confound me.

emerged as a rich topic of study in many disciplines.<sup>9</sup> Place, however, deserves attention as a topic with particular associations and boundaries.<sup>10</sup> 'Place' can be seen and transgressed. 'Place' accrues significances, powers, ownership, history, venerability, inclusion and exclusion, and identity. 'Place' gives shelter, and a sense of community, attracting people, discussion, and argument. This collection of papers, then, is about the mechanics of owning, inhabiting, experiencing, organizing, negotiating, and manipulating spaces and places. The core subject matter for this collection is not so much architectural, as might have been expected, but rather processual, and based upon the activities, attitudes and phenomena that occur in specific locations.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., H. Lefèbvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (London 1991), esp. pp. 404ff on the analyses of space as expositions of the social production of space; and, M. P. Pearson and C. Richards, eds., *Architecture and Order, Approaches to Social Space* (London 1994, 1997). Especially appropriate here is the explanatory introductory essay "Ordering the World: Perceptions of Architecture, Space and Time," pp. 1-37.

<sup>10</sup> Paraphrasing Liddell and Scott, the word *topos* might refer to a place or region, a geographical position, public sites or buildings, a passage in an author, a burial place, or more specifically, the grave of a martyr, or of a monastery associated with a martyr's grave, a room in a house, a position in the zodiac, an opening, occasion, or opportunity. These many different meanings depend, of course, on context of use and we should attempt to distinguish between, for example, post-classical developments of Aristotelian concepts of space (i.e. as a container of three-dimensional bodies or a metaphorical container of incorporeal beings) and post-classical criticisms of Aristotle's theory of *topos*, emphasizing relational (between) and ethical (e.g. good versus bad) places (*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* [1992], s.v. "Space," pp. 1933-4).

<sup>11</sup> Pearson and Richards, "Space Syntax and Space Semantics" in Pearson and Richards (1997), pp. 29-30. Similarly, such text-based art-historical works as H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton 1981), and C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312-1453, Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs NJ 1972) could provide useful connections between the various disciplines.

## Social and Spiritual Geographies

As has been argued so persuasively by Henri Lefèbvre, space and place can be understood, at least in part, to be socially constructed.

Everyone knows what is meant when we speak of a 'room' in an apartment, the 'corner' of the street, a 'marketplace', a shopping or cultural centre, a public 'place,' and so on. These terms of everyday discourse serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces, and in general to describe a social space. They correspond to a specific use of that space, and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute. Their relationships are ordered in a specific way.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, our analyses of historical places should be sympathetic to all historically documented social cues, written and material, textual and archaeological. Helen Saradi's study in the present volume, "Privatization of Urban Properties in the Early Byzantine Centuries: Social and Cultural Implications" (pp. 17-43), is an exemplary reading of papyrological texts in association not only with comparative documents from other parts of the larger Roman world,<sup>13</sup> but also read in tandem with archaeological evidence.<sup>14</sup> Saradi's focus on the urban context is particularly useful to the apparent trajectory of cross-disciplinary discussions because it contributes to the emerging description of a Late Antique social

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<sup>12</sup> Lefèbvre (1991), p. 16; see also note 10.

<sup>13</sup> Thus enhancing such studies as, e.g., J. Durliat's, *De la ville antique a la ville byzantine. Le probleme des subsistances* (Collection de l'Ecole Francaise de Rome 136 (Rome 1990); F. Millar, "Empire and City, Augustus to Julian: obligations, excuses and status," *JRS* 73 (1983) 76-96. A. K. Bowman and D. Rathbone, "Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt," *JRS* 82 (1992) 107-27. See also C. A. Nelson, "Four Papyri from the Berlin Collection" *BASP* 32 (1995) 123-32 (nb: only the first document is relevant to the subject of the legalities and practicalities of late antique Egyptian urban spaces).

<sup>14</sup> Although this is difficult to do considering the dismissive attitudes and practices of early archaeologists. See, e.g., Dominic Montserrat, "'No Papyrus and No Portraits': Hogarth, Grenfell and the First Season in the Fayum, 1895-6," *BASP* 33 (1996) 133-76.

reality undergoing continued readjustment due to the changing economic needs and circumstances of its constituents. Saradi's recognition of distinct and characteristic phases, i.e. historical limits, for special uses of particular terms sharpens our understanding of changing meanings associated with this terminology and the spaces designated by it.<sup>15</sup>

Any understanding of space and place within a religious society should consider spiritual issues. The remaining articles consider locations for both individual and communal manifestations of spirituality. For the sake of convenience, let us define spirituality as a ritually enhanced emotional evocation or response (toward a thing, event, situation or person).<sup>16</sup> As such, spirituality must have formal traditions that can be manipulated and organized. Spiritual leaders, then, might be seen as the trailblazers and architects of those traditions. Rebecca Krawiec's paper in the present volume, "Space, Distance and Gender: Authority and the Separation of Communities in the White Monastery" (pp. 45-63), on Shenute's assumption of leadership of the male and female monastic communities at Akhmim, reveals Shenute's dramatic use of Old Testament prototypes for the crafting of his authority over a separate and subordinate female community, and reveals the nuns' perspectives on his spiritual and spatial transgressions. In contrast, Elizabeth Bolman's article, "*Mimesis*, Metamorphosis and Representation in Coptic Monastic Cells" (pp. 65-77) describes one approach to the generation and maintenance of a spiritually

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<sup>15</sup> Conversely, and probably against our expectations, we find the continued use of Byzantine Greek legal terms during the Abbasid period in the language for deeding of ownership of monastic properties at Bawit in L. MacCoull, "The Bawit Contracts" *BASP* 31 (1994) 141-58.

<sup>16</sup> Following the lead of philosophers, theologians and historians of religion who have defined spirit (*pneuma*) variously as of the divine generally, or more specifically as of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ; as the human intellect or innermost self; as transformative; and, as independent of matter. And following the lead of liturgists and other scholars of ritual who have long studied the evocation or generation of spirituality by ritual. Most useful in this regard are G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York 1945, 1983); and C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford 1992).

beneficial place, by private devotional viewing (as a pro-active ascetic practice) of the decorations of their cells. Mimesis is a popular term in critical theory these days but for our purposes it should retain its special meanings within the context of early Christian ritual practice and spirituality dedicated to ensuring eternal salvation in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>17</sup> Also key to our understanding of this traditional religious society's constructions of space are notions of overlapping worldly and otherworldly places.<sup>18</sup> Sheila McNally's article, "Transformations of Ecclesiastical Space: Churches in the Area of Akhmīm" (pp. 79-95) presents a diachronic survey of developing architectural forms as responding in part to changing spiritual needs and social pressures.<sup>19</sup> McNally thus describes communal, spiritual places within a regionally bounded and historically coherent continuum as deliberately shaped and

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<sup>17</sup> G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrimage to Desert Ascetics in the Christian East during the Fourth and Fifth Centuries* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1992) on the witnessing of monastic mimesis as a goal of pilgrimage makes similar interpretive use of well-mined texts, e.g., the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. It would seem that significant numbers of images, inscriptions and graffiti within monastic contexts merit re-consideration within this context.

<sup>18</sup> For an anthropological analysis of this notion in early Christian thought, see J. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs NJ 1975). J. M. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, An Egyptian Monk* (London 1897); and Wolska-Conus, trans. *Topographie chrétienne* (Paris 1968) offer one interesting sixth-century Christian (Egyptian?) view of this overlap. H. Maguire's *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park PA 1987) explores visual constructions of the temporal and eternal worlds.

<sup>19</sup> McNally's architectural history of space builds upon the methodological groundwork begun by T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople, Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, Pa., 1971) R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (Berkeley 1983). T. Wilfong, "Western Thebes in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries: A Bibliographic Survey of Jeme and its Surroundings," *BASP* 26:1-2 (1989) 89-145 provides one model for complementary study but still awaits the attentions of archaeologists.

designated architecturally.<sup>20</sup> The distinct phases of architectural design are as yet, however, without corresponding descriptive terminology confirmed in primary sources.

### ***Topoi: Concluding Remarks***

The social and spiritual geographies described in these articles existed within the special historical circumstances of post-pharaonic Egypt. It is my hope that further investigation by papyrologists will assist in specifying culturally contingent descriptive language, thereby enhancing the precision of our spatial interpretations, and revealing new avenues for research.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> J. Kramer (1990); see also C. Goodnoh, *Negotiating Sacred Landscape: A Case Study of the Topography of Traditional Religion in the Arsinoite Nome (Fayum Oasis) during the Third Century CE* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, in progress).

<sup>21</sup> I limit myself to mentioning only two other critically important space-related topics: studies of *loca sancta*, one of the most interesting phenomena to develop in late antiquity (see, e.g., G. Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* [Washington, D.C. 1982]) do not usually look to papyrological evidence; and art historical studies of late antique representational and especially pictorial space lack historically appropriate descriptive terms.

## Privatization and Subdivision of Urban Properties in the Early Byzantine Centuries: Social and Cultural Implications

The subdivision of public and private space in the early Byzantine period is a well known phenomenon recently discussed with special attention.<sup>1</sup> Although earlier archaeological works tended to look at this development as a disorderly appropriation of public or private properties, which were neglected and abandoned by civil authorities or private owners,<sup>2</sup> recent studies throw new light upon this process. It has been shown that according to literary sources, the establishment of private dwellings and workshops in the porticoes flanking avenues and in other public buildings had already begun in the fourth century.<sup>3</sup> This trend was accelerated in the following centuries on account of the gradual dissolution of the civil administration and the loss of urban revenues. In most excavated sites such transformations of urban properties have been traditionally dated vaguely to the end of the early Byzantine period, and have often been dismissed by classical archaeologists as of little or no interest. Recent excavation reports, however, attempt to provide a more accurate date, in some cases placing the transformations in an earlier period, the fifth-sixth centuries or even the late fourth century.<sup>4</sup> In this respect the archaeological

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Professor J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz for his most useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The standard study on early Byzantine urbanism remains the work of D. Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert* (Munich 1969) 58-59.

<sup>3</sup> H. Saradi, "The Dissolution of the Urban Space in the Early Byzantine Centuries: The Evidence of the Imperial Legislation," in *Symmeikta* 9, part 2 (Athens 1994), *Μνήμη* Δ. Α. Ζακυθινόυ, ed. N.G. Moschonas, 295-308.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., for example, J. H. Humphrey, "Vandal and Byzantine Carthage: Some New Archaeological Evidence," in: J. G. Pedley, ed., *New Light on Ancient Carthage* (Ann Arbor 1980), 108-109, 113-115. The L-shaped stoa of Byllis in Nova Epirus was occupied by houses from the fourth to the sixth centuries and a

evidence coincides with evidence from literary sources and the imperial legislation.

A series of imperial decrees indicates beyond any doubt that the appropriation of urban public land and buildings by individuals for private use was not always illegal or a consequence of abandonment of civic properties, and it did not always occur in a disorderly fashion. The emperors attempted to control this trend with specific measures, in order either to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the cities or to benefit financially from the change of ownership. A law of Julian orders that rent be paid for houses built on public land.<sup>5</sup> Public buildings which had been declared of no use to the municipalities were given to individuals following a petition. The payment for this type of transfer of ownership should be reasonable and the municipalities benefiting from this transaction should use the money to repair decaying old buildings. Payments for past petitions, however, should be made to the imperial treasury.<sup>6</sup>

Another law stipulates that the rents of houses and their workshops erected in the porticoes of the baths of Zeuxippus in Constantinople be spent for the construction of new windows, the repair of the roofs and for the maintenance of the baths of the capital.<sup>7</sup> A law of the year 400 is even more explicit about revenues that individuals drew from appropriation of public properties: buildings, gardens and empty urban spaces should remain in the possession of the decurions and city associations. The leases should be for an unlimited time (in perpetua conducione) and every attempt to lease that comes secretly from other sources shall be

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basilica was built in it: S. Muçaj, "La basilique A de Bylis," *Iliria* 17, 1 (1987) 167-193. In Scythopolis the encroachment on the street in front of the Antonius monument is dated from numismatic evidence to the end of the fifth to the early sixth century: G. Foerster, Y. Tsafir, "The Bet She'an Excavation Project (1989-1991). City Center (North)," in: *Excavations and Surveys in Israel*, vol. 11, Engl. ed. of *Ḥadashot Arkheologiyot* no. 98 (1992) 18-19.

<sup>5</sup> *CJ* XI.70.1: Pro aedibus, quas nonnulli in solo rei publicae extruxerunt, placitam praestare pensionem cogantur.

<sup>6</sup> *CTh* XV.1.41 (a. 401).

<sup>7</sup> *CTh* XV.1.52=*CJ* VIII.11.19 (a. 424).



rejected.<sup>8</sup> Apparently the law attempted to prevent powerful individuals from benefiting by entering into such agreements,<sup>9</sup> since they could ultimately appropriate these urban properties. The state was aiming at preserving the revenues of the municipalities by impeding the trend of appropriation of municipal land by private individuals through legal agreements. Libanius' Oration XXVI c. 20 and 21 further illuminates the earliest stage of the encroachment into street porticoes. The governor of Antioch, Proclus, imposed taxes on the workshops and stores established in the intercolumnar space of Antioch's porticoes. The rents were a valuable source of municipal revenue in a period of economic difficulties.<sup>10</sup>

There is no doubt, therefore, that the municipal administrations benefited from this type of construction and that they

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<sup>8</sup> *CTh* X.3.5: Aedificia, hortos adque areas aedium publicarum et ea rei publicae loca, quae aut includuntur moenibus civitatum aut pomeriis sunt conexas, vel ea quae de iure templorum aut per diversos petita aut aeternabili domui fuerint congregata, vel civitatum territoriis ambiuntur, sub perpetua conductione, salvo dumtaxat canone, quem sub examine habitae discussionis constituit adscriptum, penes municipes, collegiatos et corporatos urbium singularum conlocata permaneant omni venientis extrinsecus atque occulte conductionis adtemptatione submota. Officia etiam palatina decem librarum auri multae subiaceant, si cui adversus praecepta huius sanctionis venienti aditum adsentatione praestiterint.

On the imperial legislation on urban space cf. J. M. Rainer, "Probleme der Stadterhaltung in der Spätantike," *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 59 (1991) 259-267; idem, "Zu den Abbruchbestimmungen in den Stadtrechten," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Rom. Abt.* 108 (1991) 325-329; C. Kunderewicz, "La protection des monuments d'architecture antique dans le Code Théodosien," *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra* IV (Milan 1971) 137-153.

<sup>9</sup> I owe the clarification of this decree to Professor J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz.

<sup>10</sup> Or. XXVI. c. 20: παρρησιάσσομαι δὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν κίωνων σκηνῶν, τί γὰρ ἂν ἄλλο τις εἴποι ταῦτα; συλλεγομένων χρημάτων. C. 21: τί δ' αὐτὰς διασώσει τὰς καλύβας, ὅταν ὁ μὲν χρόνος, ὃ δὴ πέφυκε ποιεῖν, φθείρῃ, βοηθῇ δὲ μηδεὶς, ἢ καὶ διασπάσας ἔχη ἕκαστος τὰς τε σανίδας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, τὸ δὲ ἐνοικῆσον οὐκ ἦ; πόθεν οὖν ἔσται τοῦτο τὸ ἀργύριον; ἐγὼ γάρ, ὡς οὐκ ἔσται τοῖς πένησιν οἰκησὶς τούτων μὲν ἀνηρημένων, τοῦ δὲ τῶν οἰκημάτων μισθοῦ μείζονος ἢ κατ' ἐκείνους ὄντος. C. 22: ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰσπραττόντων ἡμῶν ... τὸ δὲ νῦν καταβάλλουσι ταργύριον. Cf. also E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4<sup>e</sup>-7<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, La Haye 1977) 59-60. Novel 43 of the year 537 distinguishes the δημόσια τέλη paid by the workshops of Constantinople from the rent (στεγονόμια).

coordinated the installation of businesses in these public lots.<sup>11</sup> E. Patlagean suggested that the penalty of fifty pounds of gold, imposed by a decree of the year 439 on those who built shops and workshops inside the porticoes and streets of Constantinople,<sup>12</sup> was too high to have been paid by poor merchants.<sup>13</sup> It appears, then, that those responsible for the encroachments were the owners of buildings along the large avenues of the capital. Apparently most of them were wealthy and had appropriated urban lots and turned them into revenue producing properties. Similar trends must have occurred in other provincial cities.

It becomes clear that the owners of early Byzantine encroachments on public land were not squatters, as they have been traditionally labelled in the archaeological reports, but rather wealthy proprietors. Civil authorities and wealthy individuals probably related to state and local administration turned the empty urban space and decaying public buildings into modest income producing properties rented to merchants and artisans. In the light of these sources the picture of abandonment and disorderly occupation by squatters is substantially altered. Of course the scenario changes radically in areas which suffered from invasions at a later date. There is no doubt that invasions caused widespread devastation, flight of wealthy owners of urban properties, and subsequent occupation of these properties either by peasants from the countryside or by invading barbarians. But this chapter of urban history at the very end of the early Byzantine period does not concern us here.

The changes in private dwellings in the early Byzantine centuries present similarities to those in public buildings and

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<sup>11</sup> A similar practice is described in an inscription still preserved at the Covent Garden Market in central London and containing an act of the British Parliament, regulating the rent for wagons and stands that merchants would pay to the owners.

<sup>12</sup> *CJ* VIII.11.20.

<sup>13</sup> Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 60. See also G. L. Kurbatov, *Rannevizantijskij gorod (Antiochija v IV veke)* (Leningrad 1962), 15-82; idem, "Razloženie antičnoj gorodskoj sobstvennosti v Vizantii IV-VII vv.," *Vizantijskij Vremennik* 35 (1973), 19-32: the city property passed onto private persons, the Church, corporations and the State.

empty urban lots. At a rather late stage large aristocratic houses of the Roman peristyle type were subdivided into small dwellings with workshops and agricultural installations. The traditional architectural features of the earlier houses, such as the peristyle court and the triclinium, were converted into modest rooms built in typical fashion with stones, mud-brick and spolia. The phenomenon is ubiquitous and is observed in archaeological sites in the East and in the West. The main difficulty we encounter in evaluating the archaeological remains of this late phase is that the subdivisions did not particularly interest the excavators and have often been disposed of without even being recorded. Future excavations accurately dating these late alterations will help draw a clearer picture of the circumstances of the decline of the houses of the wealthy.

Earlier imperial legislation showed concern for and appreciation of the architectural value of private houses in the urban communities. A decree of the emperor Constantine dated to 321 recognizes the public value of ornaments of private houses (columns or marble), and forbids them to be transferred by their owners to other residences in the countryside.<sup>14</sup> This decree addressed to Crispus and Constantine II, Constantine's own sons and Caesars, and issued at Viminacium, may indicate a trend of abandonment of urban residences in favor of new ones in the suburbs and in the countryside in the Western provinces of the empire. By the last quarter of the fourth century the imperial legislation documents a crisis in the properties of the upper class. A constitution of the emperors Valens, Gratian and Valentinian of the year 377 states that the decurions did not repair the houses in the cities in which they served. Other owners apparently had similar difficulties in maintaining their urban properties: "The decurions of each city are required, even against their consent, either to repair houses within cities in which they formerly resided, or to entirely rebuild them, when this becomes necessary, because they are always obliged to discharge their duties in the same city in which they live, and should, so far as they can, contribute to the size of the same. The *possessores* of houses, who are not decurions, must repair them if

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<sup>14</sup> *CJ* VIII.10.6.

they have fallen into decay and have been neglected, and the judges shall exert their authority to enforce observance of this law.”<sup>15</sup> This decree reveals that the decurions frequently changed their residence and did not fulfil their obligations to maintain or rebuild their old residences. The indifference of the decurions obviously affected the maintenance of a number of large houses.

This evidence suggests that the transformation of the large houses into smaller units was not the result of a sudden breakdown of the earlier social structure at the end of the early Byzantine period, but of a long and slow process of change. We may guess the reasons for change of residence of the decurions: they probably moved to other cities where they could enjoy various advantages and avoid their curial obligations.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that the decree presents the crisis as being more general, since even non-decurions were no longer able to maintain their houses. It fails, however, to provide information about the reasons for the neglect of large houses by the non-decurions.

Archaeological evidence complements this picture. Most of the large houses of the peristyle type were gradually abandoned from the fourth century onwards, while those which were maintained were enlarged and received a more monumental architectural appearance.<sup>17</sup> These houses received features which would facilitate and emphasize the public functions of their owners who also held high offices in the provincial administration: the large apsidal audience room, appropriate for receiving the common people, the formal triclinium for important guests, and a second triclinium for close friends. That high officers of the imperial administration conducted public work in their private houses is confirmed by the sources.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *CJ* VIII.10.8 (transl. S. P. Scott).

<sup>16</sup> I owe this clarification to Professor J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz.

<sup>17</sup> S. P. Ellis, “The End of the Roman House,” *AJA* 92 (1988) 565-576; idem, “Power, Architecture, and Decor: How the Late Roman Aristocrat appeared to his Guests,” in *Private Art in the Private Sphere. New Perspectives on the Architecture and Decor of the Domus, Villa, and Insula*, ed. E. K. Gazda (Ann Arbor 1991) 117-134.

<sup>18</sup> *CTh* XV.1.8 (ā. 362): “the official residences of judges and houses used for judicial purposes ought to have been vindicated to public ownership and use. But

It appears that the increasing use of private houses for public functions corresponds with the diminishing importance of the public buildings in the early Byzantine period. But from the middle of the sixth century the peristyle type of house was abandoned and new examples of the type were no longer built. The old ones were maintained until they collapsed from natural disasters or enemy invasions or were subdivided into smaller units to offer dwelling space to more families. The nature of these subdivisions is common everywhere. The porticoes of the peristyle were closed up with walls built in the intercolumnar space, while other transverse walls inside the porticoes divided them into smaller rooms. Larger rooms, including the triclinia, were divided into smaller rooms by partition walls. Often these walls were raised to about 2 m. leaving the upper part open to facilitate air circulation and allow light in.<sup>19</sup> Some of these walls contain stone troughs which have been interpreted as places to feed animals or to store dry products.<sup>20</sup> Agricultural installations and workshops are often found in these small units.

There is no doubt that the economic and social life of the new dwellers was, in comparison, very modest; the material remains offer a striking contrast with the earlier luxurious ornaments of these houses and the sophisticated life of their owners. There was no appreciation whatsoever for the architectural ornaments of these houses or their elegant mosaics. Walls were usually built directly on the mosaics without even cutting them.<sup>21</sup> Mosaics, frescoes and

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because the execution of our salutary order has been deferred, now at least it shall be carried into effect" (transl. C. Pharr). Olympiodorus, *Historia* fr. 41 probably implies the same practice: "Ὅτι ἕκαστος τῶν μεγάλων οἰκῶν τῆς Ῥώμης, ὥς φησιν, ἅπαντα εἶχεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὅποσα πόλις σύμμετρος ἡδύνατο ἔχειν, ἱππόδρομον καὶ φόρους καὶ ναοὺς καὶ πηγὰς καὶ λουτρά διάφορα. B. Baldwin, "Olympiodorus of Thebes," *L'Antiquité Classique* 49 (1980) 216 interprets this passage as sardonic. The editor Blockley, p. 220 expresses doubts.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., for example, the House of Hesychius at Cyrene: S. Stucchi, *Architettura cirenaica* (Rome 1975) 490.

<sup>20</sup> While some of these rooms were located away from the entrance, others were directly open to the streets, which were apparently used as stores: Ellis, "The End of the Roman House," 175-176.

<sup>21</sup> On the nature of the subdivisions cf. S. Ellis, *An Archaeological Study of Urban Domestic Housing in the Mediterranean AD 400-700* (Ph.D. Diss. Oxford, 1984).

other wall decoration in stucco often survived for centuries, sometimes for more than half a millennium, when the rich houses were finally turned into small dwellings.<sup>22</sup> In Constantinople, however, literary sources suggest continuity of the site and perhaps of the structure of early Byzantine aristocratic houses into the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup> The nature of their possible early Byzantine and mediaeval alterations remains unclear, since it is not documented in the literary sources.

Various reasons have been advanced to interpret this phenomenon. Natural disasters such as earthquakes certainly played a role. This process appears to have started early on. The "late" modest alterations in large urban houses at Ptolemais were introduced after these houses were destroyed by an earthquake, probably in 365.<sup>24</sup> In Ephesos the peristyle of the "Freudenhaus" by the Embolos was altered in the fourth century.<sup>25</sup> Opposite to it residential complexes were rearranged in a similar fashion after an earthquake in the middle of the fourth century. The peristyle was abandoned and divided into smaller dwelling units of 90m<sup>2</sup> or less.<sup>26</sup> These complexes were finally destroyed by another earthquake followed by fire early in the seventh century. Archaeological

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<sup>22</sup> Cf., for example, a rich urban house of about 700 m<sup>2</sup> (25.50 x 27 m), built in the second half of the second century A.D.: M. Gawlikowski, *Syria* 67 (1990) 451. In Ephesos, frescoes of the large houses are remarkably preserved. They have been maintained for centuries either as a manifestation of the owners' traditionalism, or as an expression of admiration for a great past: *Forschungen in Ephesos* VIII/1, V. Strocka, *Die Wandmalereien der Hanghäuser* (Wien 1977) 142-43. But in the sixth to seventh centuries the frescoes were restored with thin lime patches.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the conclusion of P. Magdalino, *Constantinople médiévale. Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines* (Paris 1996) 42-48.

<sup>24</sup> J. B. Ward-Perkins, J. H. Little, D. J. Mattingly, "Town Houses at Ptolemais, Cyrenaica: A Summary Report of Survey and Excavation Work in 1971, 1978-1979," *Libyan Studies* 17 (1986) 125.

<sup>25</sup> W. Jobst, "Das 'öffentliche Freudenhaus' in Ephesos," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Institutes* (Wien) 51 (1976-77) 61-84.

<sup>26</sup> H. Vetters, "Zum Stockwerkbau in Ephesos," in *Mélanges Mansel* (Ankara 1974) I, 69-92; idem, "Die Hanghäuser an der Kuretenstrasse," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Institutes* 50 (1972-75) Beiblatt 331-380; idem, "Zur Baugeschichte der Hanghäuser," in *Forschungen in Ephesos* VIII/1, VIII/2.

evidence also suggests that although the rich houses suffered several alterations, members of the urban upper class continued to dwell in them for some time. For example, the northwest corner of the "Hanghaus 2" was rebuilt, radically altering the plan of the old house.<sup>27</sup> Two imperial portraits were found in one of the rooms of "Hanghaus 2," one identified with Marcus Aurelius, the other dating to the third century.<sup>28</sup> The busts of Tiberius and Livia were still in a niche probably from earlier Roman centuries when the owners wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to the emperors.<sup>29</sup> There is no doubt that the archaeological evidence is not secure; much work is still needed to date accurately not only specific houses but also larger residential districts. The overall picture which emerges from all the areas of the empire is that of a gradual transformation of the domestic space of the urban upper class which no longer had the means nor the interest to maintain large houses. This situation coincides with the information from imperial decrees about neglect of houses by the urban aristocracy. Some of the owners of the aristocratic houses may have left for Constantinople which had become very attractive because of the imperial court;<sup>30</sup> the provincial cities could no longer offer the prestige of an active political and social life on account of declining economic resources and administrative changes.

Enemy invasions were also a major factor in the areas of the empire which suffered attacks and permanent occupation. Wealthy aristocrats abandoned their houses and fled when their cities of residence were seriously threatened by enemies. For example, Claudius Gordianus, grandfather of Fulgentius of Ruspe, vacated

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<sup>27</sup> H. Vetters, "Ephesos. Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht 1983," *Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse Öst. Ak. der Wiss.* 121 (1984) 224.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, "Ephesos. Vorläufiger Grabungsbericht 1982," *ibid.* 120 (1983) 121.

<sup>29</sup> M. Aurenhammer, "Römische Porträts aus Ephesos. Neue Funde aus dem Hanghaus 2," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Institutes* 54 (1983) Beibl. 105-146; L. Robert, "Dans une maison d'Éphèse un serpent et un chiffre," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1982) 126-132, esp. 126-130.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602* (Oxford 1964, repr. 1986) 554; G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1974) 167-169; Ellis, "The End of the Roman House," 574.

his house in Carthage when the Vandals took the city, and fled to Italy. One generation later, when his sons returned, they found that Arian priests had occupied their ancestral dwelling. Although they asked that it be returned to them, they were refused ownership.<sup>31</sup> In Italy the long political and military crisis and the collapse of Roman rule brought about a widespread devastation in the public and private sectors. Great houses of renowned families are attested as ruined by neglect, the passage of time, and fire.<sup>32</sup>

Archaeological evidence confirms the abandonment of houses before invading enemies and subsequent occupation first by peasants of the surrounding area who fled seeking security inside the walls of cities. The crowded conditions in Caričin Grad (Justiniana Prima) in Macedonia Secunda have been recorded with accuracy in the excavators' reports. This city best illustrates the conditions and changes created in urban space by invasions in the last decades of the sixth century, during the reign of Justin II. Caričin Grad is a valuable site as well, since the city's life lasted less than a century and was abandoned after its destruction early in the seventh century. Porticoes, baths and other open public spaces as well as the "villa urbana" were subdivided to accommodate people from the countryside who fled before the invading Avars and Slavs.<sup>33</sup> In Apameia in Syria some parts of large houses were abandoned and porticoes of the peristyles were converted to small dwellings dated to the end of the sixth or early seventh century. Wells and workshops were established; in the courtyards, structures for

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<sup>31</sup> *Diacre de Carthage: Vie de Saint Fulgence de Ruspe*, ed. G.-G. Lapeyre (Paris 1929), c. 1: domo propria donata sacerdotibus arianis.

<sup>32</sup> Procopius, *Bell. Vand.* III.2.24: οἱ δὲ τὰς τε οἰκίας ἐνέπρησαν αἱ τῆς πόλης ἀγχισία ἦσαν, ἐν αἷς ἦν καὶ ἡ Σαλουστίου, τοῦ Ῥωμαίου τὸ παλαιὸν τὴν ἱστορίαν γράψαντος, ἧς δὴ τὰ πλεῖστα ἡμῖκαυτα καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἔστικε; Gregorius Magnus, *Dial.* 2.15, *PL* 66, col. 162: in hac urbe dissoluta moenia, eversas domos, destructas ecclesias turbine cernimus, eiusque aedificia longo senio lassata ... videmus; idem., *Ep.* XIV.3: parte detecta, parte diruta, parte igne ... consumpta; Ennodius, *Ep.* VIII.31: omnia aedificia eius sub negligentia consenescent (house of Boethius in Milan).

<sup>33</sup> V. Kondič, V. Popović, *Caričin Grad, site fortifié dans l'Illyricum byzantin* (Belgrade 1977) 372 ff.; I. Popović, B. Bavant, V. Kondič, J.-M. Spieser, ed., *Caričin Grad II. Le quartier sud-ouest de la ville haute* (Belgrade, Rome 1990) 297 ff.



feeding animals were installed. J. Balty suggested that the wealthy proprietors had left on account of the Persian invasion and later the Arab threat. Then peasants from the countryside who had been ruined by the Persian occupation settled in.<sup>34</sup> However, in Pella of the Decapolis a large house was abandoned, robbed of its stone revetment and occupied by "squatters" in the early Byzantine period, rather than in the seventh century.<sup>35</sup>

A second stage of the crisis and dissolution of the earlier urban architectural structure was caused by the occupation of cities by the invaders. For example, after the destruction of Dinogetia by fire by the Kotrigours in 559, small poor houses were built on the site.<sup>36</sup> In border areas where the principles of Roman urbanism were not very strong, local domestic architectural tradition, typical of the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, was maintained under the Roman occupation. The cities of early Byzantine Palestine provide remarkable evidence of the persistence of local urban features. In Palestine the peristyle type of house was not very common<sup>37</sup> and in the Negev, although the houses were built around courtyards, none was flanked by a perfect peristyle.<sup>38</sup> In the West the collapse of Roman rule and profound socio-economic changes resulted in the installation of the wealthy landowners in the countryside and the

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<sup>34</sup> J. Balty, "Notes sur l'habitat romain, byzantin et arabe d'Apamée. Rapport de synthèse," in *Apamée de Syrie. Bilan des recherches archéologiques 1973-1979. Aspects de l'architecture domestique d'Apamée. Actes du Colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 29, 30 et 31 mai 1980*, ed. J. Balty (Bruxelles 1984) 497-501; *idem*, "Apamée au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Témoignages archéologiques de la richesse d'une ville," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin, IV<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 1989) 92-96.

<sup>35</sup> R. H. Smith et al., "The 1980 Season at Pella of the Decapolis," *BASOR* 243 (1981) 8-9.

<sup>36</sup> I. Barnea, "L'incendie de la cité de Dinogetia au sixième siècle," *Dacia* 10 (1966) 237-259.

<sup>37</sup> Y. Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem 1995) 102.

<sup>38</sup> J. Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements in the Negev Desert* (Beer-Sheva 1991) 151.

abandonment of large urban houses. These were subsequently subdivided and occupied by more families.<sup>39</sup>

While enemy invasions and other calamities were a major factor in the abandonment and transformation of large urban houses, they do not explain the pre-invasion attestations of the phenomenon. We have seen that subdivisions of large houses date even to the fourth century. However, the phenomenon is documented even in the countryside, as in Dehes in Syria, for example, where the so-called "basilica" was subdivided in the sixth century. In this context the subdivisions have been interpreted as evidence of increased population, so well attested in all excavated sites.<sup>40</sup>

Cultural changes and an increasing emphasis on private life may also explain the gradual abandonment of the peristyle houses and their eventual disappearance in the early Byzantine period. This trend was accompanied by a preference for closed interior space rather than open spaces in private houses, which had enhanced the public aspect of the Roman aristocratic house.<sup>41</sup> The change may be best illustrated in the famous manuscript illumination of *Cod. Vat. lat. 3225 fol. 40r* with the representation of the death of Dido: Dido is shown on a couch on a pyre in a room, although Virgil (V.494) placed the suicide in a court under the open sky.<sup>42</sup> The changing attitudes towards private space have been

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<sup>39</sup> Cf., for example, G. Noyé, "Villes, économie et société dans la province de Bruttium-Lucanie du IV<sup>e</sup> au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *La Storia dell'Alto Medioevo italiano (VI-X secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia. Convegno Internazionale (Siena, 2-6 dicembre 1992)*, ed. R. Francovich and G. Noyé (Firenze 1994) 705.

<sup>40</sup> J.-P. Sodini *et al.*, "Déhès (Syrie du nord). Campagnes I-III (1976-1978). Recherches sur l'habitat rural," *Syria* 57 (1980) 296, 300. Another example in ancient Alasarna in Kos: *Praktika Archaeologikes Hetaireias* 1987, 355.

<sup>41</sup> The public aspect of the Roman house has been identified in several of its architectural features, especially the pool of the atrium deriving from gymnasia, the porticoes, and the display of marble statues and panel paintings. These were features of public Greek architecture which, according to explicit statements of Latin sources, the Romans of the early Empire imitated consciously: A. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Social Structure of the Roman House," *PBSR* 56 (1988) 43-97, esp. 58 ff.

<sup>42</sup> K. Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination* (New York 1977) 36.

analyzed in an illuminating study by Y. Thébert.<sup>43</sup> Compartmentalization of large peristyle houses began in the fourth century.<sup>44</sup> Before the final subdivisions which accommodated poor families, the rich owners had defined interior spaces by blocking the open spaces of colonnades with curtains or by transforming them into halls with low walls.<sup>45</sup> Y. Thébert offers a new evaluation of these late alterations: they were "part of the evolution of domestic space rather than signs of decadence."<sup>46</sup> An emphasis on modesty in the domestic environment, encouraged by the Church,<sup>47</sup> may also have played a role.<sup>48</sup> The new type of mediaeval villa which broke from Roman tradition emerged in Italy at the end of the fifth century: its architectural planning was compact and austere.<sup>49</sup> In the East it is assumed that the traditional Mediterranean plan of house around a courtyard replaced the Roman peristyle type house. The courtyard type of house corresponded better to the needs of private family life, while the more impressive spaces of the Roman peristyle type house

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<sup>43</sup> "Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Ph. Ariès, G. Duby, I, *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, P. Veyne, ed., transl. A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass. and London 1987) 315-409. Cf. also S. Ellis, "La Casa," in *La civiltà bizantina. Oggetti e messaggio. Architettura e ambiente di vita*, ed. A. Guillou (Rome 1993) 169-226, which adopts this interpretation.

<sup>44</sup> Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture," 390 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 388ff. and fig. 43.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>47</sup> Cf., for example, St. John Chrysostom, *PG* 49, col. 41: καὶ ἡμεῖς τοίνυν μὴ τὰς οἰκίας καλλωπίζωμεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τῆς οἰκίας τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν ἡμετέραν ... Οἰκίας οἰκοδομοῦμεθα, ἵνα οἰκῶμεν, οὐχ ἵνα φιλοτιμώμεθα. Τὸ μείζον τῆς χρείας, περιττὸν τῆς χρείας ἐστὶ καὶ ἀχρηστον ... οἰκία μείζων τῆς χρείας ἐμποδίζει πρὸς τὴν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀποδημίαν. Βούλει λαμπρὰς καὶ μεγάλας οἰκοδομεῖν οἰκίας; οὐ κωλύω, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐπὶ γῆς.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ellis, "La casa," 190-191.

<sup>49</sup> Cf., for example, M. Gualtieri, M. Salvatore, A. Small, "Lo scavo di S. Giovanni di Ruoti ed il periodo tardoantico in Basilicata," *Atti della Tavola Rotonda: Roma 4 Luglio 1981* (Bari 1983); A. M. Small, J. Freed, "S. Giovanni di Ruoti (Basilicata). Il contesto della villa tardo-romana," in: A. Giardina, ed., *Società romana e Impero tardoantico III: Le Merci, gli Insediamenti* (Rome 1986) 97-129 (villa at Ruoti).

corresponded better to the needs of the public life of the Roman upper class.<sup>50</sup>

These proposed motives satisfactorily explain the reasons for the abandonment of the peristyle type of house, but do not address the nature of the new inhabitants who lived in the subdivided units and who are traditionally labelled "squatters." J. H. Little and D. J. Mattingly presented a re-evaluation of this traditional view by the late Ward-Perkins, based on his assessment of House G at Ptolemais.<sup>51</sup> He suggested that in the last stage of the house, the common entrance into it may be an indication that the property was owned by one person who introduced the subdivisions, "whether for convenience or for rents."<sup>52</sup> The authors conclude: "The late phases of reconstruction and habitation in this quarter of Ptolemais were of a type which have been dismissed all too often in the past as 'squatter occupation.' Whilst the essential pragmatism of the building work in these phases may offend the sensibilities of some Classical archaeologists (who tend to view the reuse of any architectural element as indicative of a complete collapse of civilised life), Ward-Perkins himself was quick to realise the unique importance of these structures. The chance preservation of so much of this evidence in this area affords us an insight into the true complexity of some of these later buildings and demonstrates the absurdity of terms such as 'squatter occupation,' with all the implicit assumptions which go with them. It would therefore seem that there must now be a great deal of fresh thinking about the final stages of urban life in Cyrenaica."<sup>53</sup> The argument presented against the "squatter occupation" of these houses is that they maintained one entrance which was used by all the residents. It may be argued, however, that a single entrance was maintained for security reasons.

Papyri appear to complement the picture by offering valuable information about the subdivisions of urban dwellings. Leases of parts of houses in the Byzantine period show new trends, not

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<sup>50</sup> Ellis, "La casa," 186 ff.

<sup>51</sup> "Town Houses at Ptolemais," 109-153, esp. 111-126.

<sup>52</sup> p. 124.

<sup>53</sup> p. 152.

documented earlier, namely, a progressive compartmentalization of urban dwellings and their transformation into revenue properties. Although papyri reflect specific architectural traditions shaped by local cultural and climatic conditions, certain patterns of changes can be discerned and appear to be valid in other provinces of the empire.

The leases of ἐξέδραι are striking. In Greek the term indicated a semicircular structure open on one side. In the papyri of the Ptolemaic period the *exedra* was a formal room in rich residences often near the dining room. In the Roman and early Byzantine periods the term continued to identify a hall open on one side and attached to important rooms of rich residences,<sup>54</sup> or adjacent to modest houses usually on the ground floor. Often it opened onto a court and was obviously supported by one or two pillars.<sup>55</sup> This feature, like a modest small portico, is also found in houses in the Middle East and it is thus transcribed in the rabbinical sources.<sup>56</sup> Only one papyrus of the Roman period indicates the use of an *exedra* as a storage place.<sup>57</sup> In another text an *exedra* was rented as a workshop for dyeing wool with a κοιτωνάριον on the second floor.<sup>58</sup> With only one exception, all documents mentioning *exedrai* on papyri of the early Byzantine centuries are leases in urban

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<sup>54</sup> Cf., for example, Eusebius, *HE* III.39: μεσαυλείου καὶ ἐξεδρῶν καὶ προπύλων. On the place and function of the *exedra* in the architectural structure of rich houses of North Africa cf. Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture," 373-374. The *exedra* opened onto a corridor or a portico, and was usually smaller than the triclinium. It was used as the master's office for business transactions or intellectual work with which the mosaic decoration corresponded. J. Rossiter, "Convivium and Villa in Late Antiquity," in W. J. Slater, ed., *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991), 210 n. 18 rejects the use of the term *exedra* by Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture," 373-374 for the main reception room. Cf. also B.W. Frier, "The Rental Market in Early Imperial Rome," *JRS* 67 (1977) 29 n. 15.

<sup>55</sup> Geneviève Husson, *OIKIA. Le vocabulaire de la maison privée en Égypte d'après les papyrus grecs* (Paris 1983) 77.

<sup>56</sup> Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 63.

<sup>57</sup> *BGU* III 981.26 (79 AD; Diospolis Parva): εἰς λόγον ἐνοικίου ἐξέδρας, εἰς ἣν ἐνκλείει χόρτον.

<sup>58</sup> *P.Ross.Georg.* III 56.

houses.<sup>59</sup> But it is only in some Byzantine papyri that *exedrai* were rented as dwelling places.<sup>60</sup> Some *exedrai* were rented together with a small bedroom (κοιτωνάριον) and secondary spaces,<sup>61</sup> or with a store (ταμειῶν).<sup>62</sup>

*P.Lond.* V 1768 from Hermoupolis, dated to the sixth century, is particularly revealing. The papyrus contains a lease of part of a house. Two entire *exedrai* are rented with the corresponding part of the well, the court, the δῶμα (flat roof, terrace), obviously located above the *exedra*, one καμάρα (vaulted room)<sup>63</sup> in the basement (ἐν τῷ καταγαίῳ)<sup>64</sup> and a room for storing hay (ἀχυροθήκη). The two *exedrai* with the attached spaces were rented "to be used and to dwell in" (πρὸς χρῆσιν ἐμὴν καὶ οἰκήσιν).<sup>65</sup> They are described as being one inside the other (μιας μὲν ἐνδότερον τῆς ἄλλης); the exterior one turned toward the north, opened on the *aithrion* (small court or light well);<sup>66</sup> the interior one turned toward the east (τὴν μὲν ἔξωθεν νεύουσιν εἰς βορρᾶν ἐπὶ τὴν αἶθραν τὴν δὲ ἐσωθεν νεύουσιν εἰς ἀπηλιώτην).<sup>67</sup> G. Husson interprets the description of the text as indicating that the two *exedrai* were located one parallel to the other.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67309 (569; Antinoopolis): surety. Husson, *OIKIA*, 75.

<sup>60</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 76.

<sup>61</sup> *SB* VI 9154 (6th-7th c.) including ἐν τῷ δώματι ἀρτοθήκην; 9462 (6th-7th c.) with a καμάραν μίαν ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ σου... καὶ ἀρτοθήκην μίαν ἐν τῷ δώματι τῆς οἰκίας.... On κοιτών, bedroom, in the papyri, and on δῶμα, flat roof or terrace cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 151-154, 63-65.

<sup>62</sup> *P. Panop.* 12 (337). On ταμειῶν cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 275-276.

<sup>63</sup> The *kamara* was a very common type of structure in Egypt, used mainly for storage, but also as a dwelling: Husson, *OIKIA*, 122-128. For an example in the Middle East cf. a complex of small houses (sixth century) in Jerusalem south of the Temple Mount, with a courtyard with several underground caves for storage: Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 40.

<sup>64</sup> On the *katagaion* cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 131-133.

<sup>65</sup> ll. 11-12.

<sup>66</sup> On the *aithrion*, cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 29-36.

<sup>67</sup> ll. 2-4.

<sup>68</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 75.

This interpretation, however, contradicts her conclusion that the *exedra* was open on one side usually onto a court. Alternatively, we may understand the arrangement of the two *exedrai* as being at a right angle, thus forming the two sides of the courtyard. This explains the stipulation of the lease that with the *exedrai* was rented *their* corresponding part of the well, the court and the terrace (μετὰ τοῦ μέρους αὐτῶν τοῦ φρέατος καὶ τῆς αὐλῆς καὶ τοῦ δώματος).<sup>69</sup> In this case the part of the house that was rented was actually the open space of the two porticoes surrounding the two sides of the court with part of the court and the terrace above, and one vaulted room and a storage room. There is no doubt that the emphasis was placed on the *exedrai* which were the main part of the rented space because they are mentioned first.<sup>70</sup> Such a dwelling place does not offer too much protection from heat and wind. Since this was not a public area offering shelter to beggars, but part of a private dwelling rented by someone who could afford to pay rent, it is conceivable that this type of arrangement could lead to temporary walls built with perishable material, and later permanent subdivisions. This document reveals that porticoes around courtyards of urban houses could be rented as dwellings following a formal legal document. A clause at the end of the document specifies that parts of the same house were rented to other tenants.<sup>71</sup>

A papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (*P.Oxy.* VII 1037) dated to 444 contains the lease of an entire *exedra* with its appurtenances (ὁλόκληρον ἐξέδραν σὺν χρηστηρίοις πᾶσιν). That the *exedra* is rented as a whole suggests that it could also be divided.<sup>72</sup> Papyri also

<sup>69</sup> ll. 4-6.

<sup>70</sup> Similar is the case in *SB* VI 9154 (6th-7th c.) from Herakleopolis in which an *exedra* on the first floor is rented with a κοιτωνάριον and the corresponding part of the roof and one ἀρτοθήκη. On *artothēke* cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 44-45.

<sup>71</sup> ll. 13-16: ὅπερ ἐνοίκιον ἀποδώσω σοι πρὸς λῆξιν ἐκάστου ἔτους ἀνυπερθέτως κατὰ μῆμην τῶν ἄλλων ἐνοίκων.

<sup>72</sup> Other documents in which it is specified that entire rooms are rented: *P. Ross.Georg.* V 43.3-4 (τόπον ἓνα ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου; 7th c.); *P.Stras.* VI 600.14-15 (ὁλόκληρον τρίκλινον; 600); *P.Oxy.* XVI 1957.10-11 (τόπους τρεῖς.... ὁλοκλήρους; 430).

record leases of *exedrai* opening onto an internal court,<sup>73</sup> or to the common *aithrion*.<sup>74</sup> Subdivision of porticoes flanking *aithria* is fully documented in archaeological excavations. We may find a parallel in two simple Byzantine houses with a common courtyard excavated in Gerasa. One house has three rooms, the central one being the triclinium. By the end of the Byzantine period the courtyard was closed with small dwellings leaving a narrow passage leading to an inner court surrounded on all sides by rooms.<sup>75</sup>

*P. Oxy.* XLIV 3203 gives a different meaning to the term *exedra*. The document is the lease of a ground-level *exedra* with an underground vaulted room (*kamara*, cellar). At the end of the text another scribe wrote a brief addition confirming the deed by the lessee in which the *exedra* now is defined as συμπόσιον.<sup>76</sup> The text does not specify whether the *exedra*/*symposion* was rented as a dwelling or for commercial use.

A certain evolution has been discerned in the use of the term *symposion* in the papyri.<sup>77</sup> Originally it designated dining rooms of wealthy houses. Leases and deeds of sales of *symposia*<sup>78</sup> have been interpreted as indicating that the *symposia* were rented or sold to be used as banqueting halls, as often happened in ancient Greece and in the Middle East.<sup>79</sup> While the commercial use of the

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<sup>73</sup> *PSI* V 466 (518). Cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 75.

<sup>74</sup> *SB* XVIII 13320.29-30: μέρος ἀπὸ τῆς προκειμένης ὁλοκλήρου κοινῆς οἰκίας τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὁλόκληρον ἐξαΐδραν μίαν νεούσης εἰς ἀπηλιώτην εἰς τοῦ κοινοῦ αἰθρίου ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ στέγῃ.

<sup>75</sup> Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 271 interprets this fluctuation of the terms as indication of the ambiguity of the term *symposion* in the Byzantine papyri.

<sup>77</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 267-271.

<sup>78</sup> For example, *P.Lond.* V 1724 (578-582; Syene): sale of a *kellion* on the first story, a *symposion* on the second story above the *kellion*, a small *doma* above the *aithrion*, 1/3 of another small *doma* and 1/3 of the gateway; *P.Lond.* V 1722 (573; Syene): sale of two *kellia* on the ground floor, two *symposia* on the second floor and two *symposia* uncovered (ἀκέπαστα) on the third floor.

<sup>79</sup> P. Collart, "Réjouissances, divertissements et artistes de province dans l'Égypte romaine," *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire anciennes* 18 (1944) 134-152. For the East cf. for example, J. T. Milik, *Recherches d'épigraphie proche-orientale. I Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des*



*symposion* is attested with certainty in the papyri,<sup>80</sup> there are references to its use as a dwelling. An individual admitted that he lost money when he rented *symposia* and *kellas* (stores), because no one showed up to live in them (μήτε πρὸς ἐνοίκησιν) or to use them for banquets.<sup>81</sup> In some cases dining rooms were rented with an attached room.<sup>82</sup> Even two dining rooms of one house could be rented by one person.<sup>83</sup> *P.Oxy.* XVI 1957 dated to the year 430 contains the lease of two *symposia* rented entirely (ὀλοκλήρως). The location of one above an apse may suggest a rich house. With the *symposia* was also rented a single-flat in the *aithrion*.<sup>84</sup> This was probably a small room built in the *aithrion* for unspecified use.

G. Husson has shown that in some leases and deeds of sales the *symposion* no longer indicates a dining room, but had a broader meaning, that of an apartment, since it included other rooms, such as a *kella* (shop), or a *koiton*. Therefore it became synonymous with the Latin *cenaculum* which, although originally used for the dining room, in the Empire designated apartments in *insulae*.<sup>85</sup> Although it is possible that the evolution of the term as it appears in the papyri may simply reflect the influence of the Roman legal vocabulary, it is important to note that particularly in the Byzantine period the term *symposion* indicated a dwelling place.<sup>86</sup> G. Husson interpreted this phenomenon as a mere ambiguity of the term

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*thiases sémitiques à l'époque romaine* (Paris 1972), 141-145. These references are cited in Husson, *OIKIA*, 268-269 n. 1 and 2.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *P. Stras.* V 314.23-24; Husson, *OIKIA*, 269.

<sup>81</sup> *P. Brem.* inv. 8; Husson, *OIKIA*, 270.

<sup>82</sup> *P. Cair. Masp.* III 67302, Antinoë (555) ll. 10-14: ἀριστήριον... μετὰ τοῦ ἐγγύθεν κι...ωνος (κοιτῶνος?)... καὶ τόπον ἕνα... πρὸς ἡμετέραν χρῆσιν καὶ οἰκήσιν.

<sup>83</sup> *P.Oxy.* VIII 1129 (449); *P.Oxy.* XVI 1957 (430).

<sup>84</sup> ll. 11-12: ἕτερον συμπόσιον διακείμενον ἐπάνω τῆς ἀψίδος καὶ ἐν τῷ αἰθρίῳ γονόχορον.

<sup>85</sup> *P. Oxy.* VIII 1128.14-15: τὸ συμπόσιον καὶ τὴν ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ κέλλαν; *P. Yale* I 71.9-11: ὀλοκλήρον συμπόσιον καὶ τὸν ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ κοιτῶνα σὺν χρηστηρίοις πᾶσι. Cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 269. On the change of the term in earlier Roman sources cf. Frier, "The Rental Market in Early Imperial Rome," 28-29 (I owe this reference to Professor J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz).

<sup>86</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 271.

*symposion*, without suspecting possible changes in domestic architecture and altered functions of domestic space. The end of this evolution can be discerned in Coptic documents in which the term *symposion* is used to designate a single-room apartment.<sup>87</sup>

Triclinia also are given to lease. The few that are known were owned by aristocrats. Aurelius Petrus, θαυμασιώτατος, gave for lease to a certain locksmith (κλειτοποιός = κλειδοποιός) one *exedra*, one *koiton* in the second floor of a property and the entire triclinium (τὸ ὀλόκληρον τρίκλινον) with the terrace, the *pylon*, the basement and a courtyard.<sup>88</sup> This could have been a large house because of the reference to the *pylon*.<sup>89</sup> In this context the stipulation that the triclinium was rented ὀλόκληρον takes on a particular significance. Normally the triclinium of wealthy houses was large, and if rented, could be easily divided. In another papyrus dated to 603, Flavius Sergius, the great *komes*, gave for lease a triclinium behind a court to a certain Menas, son of Zenobios, *bucellarius* in Arsinoe. After a lacuna the text reads μέρος αὐτοῦ, perhaps part of it.<sup>90</sup> Subdivisions of dining rooms are also attested in deeds of sales.<sup>91</sup>

The overall picture that the papyrological material allows us to draw is that in the early Byzantine period many dining rooms were gradually abandoned and used for other functions.<sup>92</sup> In the list of leases of urban properties drawn up by H. Müller, only one papyrus with a lease of a dining room is recorded before the fourth century A.D.,<sup>93</sup> but seven are cited between the fourth and the early seventh

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. A. A. Schiller, "A Family Archive from Jeme," *Studi in onore di Vincenzo Arangio-Ruiz* (Naples 1956) vol. 4, 366.

<sup>88</sup> *P. Stras.* VI 600 (ca. 600), Hermoupolis.

<sup>89</sup> In Roman and Byzantine periods the *pylon*, a monumental entrance, was part of wealthy houses, but it is rarely attested in the countryside: Husson, *OIKIA*, 244.

<sup>90</sup> *P. Lond.* III 871.20.

<sup>91</sup> *P. Monac.* I 12 (590/1).

<sup>92</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 271.

<sup>93</sup> *P. Oxy.* VIII 1128 (173).

centuries (339, 430, 449, 456, 462, 555, 603).<sup>94</sup> The indications of the papyri coincide with the results of the archaeological excavations, suggesting that in the smaller peristyle type of houses the triclinium was abandoned and the houses suffered subdivisions from the fourth century onwards. The very large aristocratic houses, however, maintained the triclinium, and the antique way of reclining on a couch, for a longer period.<sup>95</sup>

*P.Oxy. XVI 1925* dated to the seventh century, throws light onto the interior decoration of an aristocratic triclinium at this late date. It contains a list of objects (σκεύη) which were brought into a *proasteion* just outside the city's gate and delivered to a certain Onouphrios, *symmachos* (assistant). In the triclinium there was one large bed (κραβάκιον α μέγα),<sup>96</sup> a *skoutarion* with its metal ornament, two small icons (one depicting St. Kollouthos gilded around the head, the other one depicting the Theotokos entirely covered with gold), a couch,<sup>97</sup> the panels of the large door (πτύχια τῆς μεγάλης θύρας), balustrades (καγκέλλια),<sup>98</sup> wooden panels (or

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<sup>94</sup> H. Müller, *Untersuchungen zur μίσθωσις von Gebäuden im Recht der gräko-ägyptischen Papyri* (Köln, Berlin, Bonn, München 1985) 345-361 contains a list of leases of houses and parts of houses.

<sup>95</sup> Rossiter, "Convivium and Villa in Late Antiquity," 199-214. High ecclesiastics also maintained the antique style of dining in the early Byzantine centuries: *Concilia Oecumenica*, ed. Schwartz, vol. 2, 1, 1ff. (Council of Chalcedon): ἐν τῷ τρικλίνῳ τοῦ ἐπισκοπείου παντὸς τοῦ κλήρου παρόντος τοῦτο ἐδογμάτισεν; *Palladii dialogus de vita S. Joannis Chrysostomi*, ed. P.R. Coleman-Norton (Cambridge 1928), 83.25; J. van den Gheyn, "Acta Sancti Theognii episcopi Beteliae Paulo Elusensi et Cyrillo Scythopolitano auctoribus ex codice Parisino Coisliniano No 303 nunc primum, cum interpretatione latina, graece edita," *Analecta Bollandiana* 10 (1891), 102.

<sup>96</sup> J. Kramer, "Κράβατος, κραβάτιον und Verwandtes in den Papyri," *APF* 41 (1995), 205-216. The use of the term as a bier in a church inventory is interesting: *P. Grenf.* II 111 (5th-6th c.).

<sup>97</sup> l. 9: ἀκκούβιον ἔχουσα χόδρον δίχα χόδρου.

<sup>98</sup> Balustrades are mentioned in *symposia* of rich houses, as in the house of Apollonios, *strategos* of Hermopolite: *P. Ryl.* II 233 (118). The text is reproduced in Husson, *OIKIA*, 313.

folding tables),<sup>99</sup> a bed of the general (?) (κραβάκιον ε... τοῦ στρατηλάτου), various architectural elements, such as a balustrade, marble capitals and small wooden columns.<sup>100</sup> The text suggests that this triclinium had maintained its elaborate architectural ornaments, some of which were obviously replaced by those listed in the document. There was concern to preserve the monumental appearance of the triclinium. It is not clear whether the distinction between the two beds (κραβάκιον α μέγα and that τοῦ στρατηλάτου) and the couch (ἄκκουβιτον) suggests a use of the triclinium also as a bedroom.<sup>101</sup> The military tone in the decoration given by the *skoutarion* corresponds with the reference to the bed of the *stratelates* (l. 15), while the two Christian icons interestingly contrast with the references to antique architectural elements, capitals, columns and couch. It is not clear whether the balustrade was a permanent partition dividing the triclinium into smaller areas or separating it from an entrance hall or a portico.

Sources concerning the end of the early Byzantine period and even later refer to dining with the verb ἀνακλίνω, thus alluding to reclining. It is impossible to determine whether the use of the verb was always literary.<sup>102</sup> We have seen that the term *symposion* ended up designating an apartment. The reasons for the abandonment of the triclinium were both financial and cultural. The triclinium expressed an antique life style, with emphasis on social activities corresponding to the high public profile of its owners. The decline of the decurions in the cities may have forced some of them to turn their urban dwellings into revenue properties.

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<sup>99</sup> Il. 13-14: πτύχιν κ... κυκάμωρον, ἄλλο πτύχιν κυκάμωρον τοῦ μεγάλου ἐργάτου. Husson, *OIKIA*, 243 recognizes the difficulties of the expression τοῦ μεγάλου ἐργάτου.

<sup>100</sup> Il. 16-24: καγκέλλια ...ε. τοῦ λουτροῦ, κεφαλίδια... μεγάλα καὶ μικρὰ διάφορα, βομοσφόρ... μεγάλα καὶ μικρὰ διάφορα, κιόνια μ... κυκάμωρα, κιόνια... κυκάμαρα, κιόνια μ... κυκάμωρα, κεφαλίδια μ... φόμενα μαρμάρινα, βομοσφορα... κυκάμαρα, κόμματα.

<sup>101</sup> Ellis, "The End of the Roman House," 567, however, insists that there is no sign that in late antiquity the use of the triclinium was in decline.

<sup>102</sup> In the East the *stibadium* continued to be used in the sixth century. For references cf. Rossiter, "Convivium and Villa," 207-208. To these add: Severus of Antioch, Homily XXXVII, *Patrologia Orientalis* 36, 3 (1972), 479.13.

The progress of Christianity was partly responsible for the abandonment of antique traditions expressing the culture of the collapsing pagan world. In some provinces of the empire where new ethnic elements settled permanently, new dining practices, such as sitting around the table, were introduced, and brought about a new organization of domestic space. In the East local cultural traditions and elements of domestic architecture regained strength at the time of the collapse of the Roman empire of the West and on account of profound changes in the composition of the upper class. The symbolism and ideology which were expressed in the architectural arrangement of the triclinium and in the antique dining practices were gradually replaced by new perceptions of space.<sup>103</sup> Much later Arethas of Caesarea testifies to the abandonment of reclining for dinner long before his time, and states that it has been maintained only in the palace.<sup>104</sup>

Leases of single-room apartments are quite common in the papyri,<sup>105</sup> but there are indications that parts of rooms were also rented. Thus *P. Lond.* III 1023 from Hermoupolis, dated to the fifth or sixth centuries, is a lease of 1/2 of a *koiton* on the first floor, 1/2 of a *kamara* in the basement, and 1/2 of a structure, unknown on account of a lacuna, in the *doma* (terrace). With these areas were also rented part of the court, the well,<sup>106</sup> the entrance and the

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. L. Bek, "Questiones convivales. The idea of the triclinium and the staging of convival ceremony from Rome to Byzantium," *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici. Odense Univ. Pr.* 12 (1983), 81-107, esp. 105.

<sup>104</sup> J. Grosdidier de Matons, "Note sur le sens médiéval du mot κλίνη," *Travaux et Mémoires* 7 (1979), 363-373. I owe this reference to Prof. P. Roilos, to whom I am grateful. The term *triklinion* also changes in the later Byzantine centuries. For example, in the archives of the monastery of Iviron, the terms *τρικλινάριον οἶκημα*, *τρίκλινον* indicate a modest house open onto a court: *Actes d'Iviron III, de 1204 à 1328*, ed. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, Denise Papa-chryssanthou, Vassiliki Kravari, avec la collaboration d'Hélène Métrévélí (Paris 1994), no. 78.16-17, 21.

<sup>105</sup> Cf., for example, *BGU* XII 2204 (574); *SB* IV 7340 (540); *SB* I 4753; 5269 (618); *P. Ross. Georg.* V 43 (7th c.); *P. Oxy.* XVI 1889 (496); 1961 (487); *P. Oxy.* VII 1038 (568); *P. Stras.* V 471 (500).

<sup>106</sup> In North African houses wells are found even in peristyle courts: Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture," 361.

*pessos* (staircase),<sup>107</sup> the *doma*, and the *aithrion*. The owner was an aristocratic lady, a certain Aurelia of Pinoution. I suppose this document reflects subdivision of the rooms with low walls which did not reach the ceiling, also known from excavations. It is also possible that at the beginning such partitions were simple curtains. In other papyri further fragmentation of dwellings is attested on account of co-ownership of houses by several individuals. In such leases halves or even smaller fractions of houses were leased. Their size and measurements are not specified.<sup>108</sup> Co-ownership of undivided properties on account of inheritance,<sup>109</sup> or other transactions, which was not unknown to the Roman law,<sup>110</sup> ultimately led to permanent divisions.

Some of the houses leased in the surviving papyri were owned by aristocrats.<sup>111</sup> In some of these documents it is mentioned that the lessor owned several urban properties.<sup>112</sup> It is impossible to

<sup>107</sup> On the *pessos*, cf. Husson, *OIKIA*, 226-30.

<sup>108</sup> Cf., for example, *SB* IV 7340 (540); *SB* VI 9591 (7th c.); 9592 (581); *P.Oxy.* XVI 1695 (360); 1965 (553); *P.Oxy.* XLVIII 3386 (338); *P.Stras.* I 4 (550); *P.Stras.* IV 247 (551); 248 (560); *P.Stras.* VII 655 (second half of the 5th c.); *P.Vindob.* G 17831; 25927 (575). Cf. also Müller, *Untersuchungen zur μίσθωσις*, 150-151.

<sup>109</sup> Cf., for example, *P.Lond.* V 1733 (594).

<sup>110</sup> See Digest VII.1.13.8: Again, if there is a legacy of the usufruct of a dwelling house, the usufructuary must not let out rooms in it, or divide the building up into separate apartments; he may, however, let it for hire, but he must let it as a house...; X.3.14.3: If the partners have agreed that the common property should not be divided within a specified period, there is no doubt that a person bound by such an agreement is permitted to sell; so if the purchaser brings an action for dividing common property, he will be defeated by the same defense as would have defeated his seller [transl. A. Watson, *The Digest of Justinian, Latin Text, edited by Th. Mommsen* (Philadelphia, Penn. 1985)].

<sup>111</sup> *P.Oxy.* XLVIII 3386 (338); *P.Oxy.* XVI 1961 (487); 1962 (500); *P.Oxy.* L 3600 (502); *P.Oxy.* VII 1038 (568); *SB* IV 7340 (540); *SB* VI 9592 (581); 9153 (596); *P.Stras.* V 338 (550); *P.Stras.* IV 247 (551); 248 (560); *P.Stras.* VI 600 (600); *P.Stras.* VII 655 (second half of the 5th c.); *BGU* I 305 (556); *BGU* XII 2202 (565); *P.Lond.* III 871 (603); 1023 (5th-6th c.).

<sup>112</sup> *P.Oxy.* XVI 1961.13-14: ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων τῇ ὑμῶν εὐγενείᾳ διακειμένων ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ πόλει (487); *P.Oxy.* VII 1038.19-20: ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων τῇ ὑμῶν ἐνδοξότητι (568); *SB* VI 9592.12-13 (581); *SB* I 4753.4: ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων κοί οἰκοπέδων ἐπὶ τῆςδε τῆς πόλεως; *SB* VI 9154.4-5 (6th-7th c.): ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων κοί ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ Ἡρακλεοπόλει; 9462.1-2: ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων κοί ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ

discern whether some of the aristocrats themselves had withdrawn to part of these houses, while they had transformed the rest of the rooms into revenue producing flats. In one case a certain Flavius Callinicus, *centenarius*, leased a room to a priest in his own house.<sup>113</sup> In the House of the Bronzes in Sardis, however, in the early seventh century, a dyeing workshop was functioning near the triclinium which apparently continued to be used as a triclinium, since the marble table was found in its original place.<sup>114</sup> It appears reasonable to suggest that the papyri illustrate a trend of subdivision of properties by the owners who responded to increasing demand. It is equally clear that part of the upper class was financially ruined and either sold their urban dwellings to wealthier men or transformed them into income producing properties. This trend probably brought about permanent subdivisions of houses by the new tenants. The tenants who rented such properties had neither the cultural refinements of the upper class nor the economic means to maintain the quality of the earlier decoration of these residences. In an epigram Palladas refers to the dangers of collecting the monthly rent from tenants who physically threatened him, and admits that he could no longer stand fights at the beginning of every month.<sup>115</sup>

The changes we have discerned may indicate increase of population, a phenomenon documented in many excavated sites in the early Byzantine centuries.<sup>116</sup> A similar trend appears in the early imperial Roman cities in Italy, as at Ostia, where parts of apartments were leased and subleased.<sup>117</sup> In the sixth century the papyri of Syene reveal crowded conditions in houses with many

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Ἡρακλέους πόλει; BGU XII 2202. 13: ἀντικρυς τῆς μεγάλης αὐτῆς οἰκίας (565); P.Lond. III 871.12-13: ἀπὸ τῶν διαφερόντων σοι ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως (603).

<sup>113</sup> SB I 4753.5-6: ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ οἰκητικῇ οἰκίᾳ.

<sup>114</sup> Ellis, "La casa," 200-201.

<sup>115</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* XI.351.

<sup>116</sup> Cf., for example, the density of dwellings in Alexandria during the early Byzantine period: M. Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III. Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie à la lumière des fouilles polonaises à Kôm el-Dikka* (Warsaw 1984) 335.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Frier, "The Rental Market in Early Imperial Rome," 28.

terraces. The description indicates that the terraces were subdivided by partition walls to be used by different tenants or owners, or that the houses were enlarged with new constructions built on the terraces.<sup>118</sup> We also know of a hut being rented on a terrace in 556 in Arsinoe, a unique example in the papyrological documentation.<sup>119</sup> An ἐπαυλις (an enclosed court used for animals, especially in the countryside)<sup>120</sup> was also leased for dwelling (πρὸς χρῆσιν ἐμὴν καὶ οἰκησιν).<sup>121</sup>

Excavations in Alexandria reveal the same trend as elsewhere: conversion of earlier open space into small private dwellings and workshops. In the early Byzantine period small houses were built in the open area between the baths, the cistern and the theatre in Kôm al-Dikka, while earlier Roman villas were subdivided to offer housing to poor people.<sup>122</sup> The increase of population and the consequent demand for housing is best illustrated in the papyri which mention lower houses in the earlier centuries but higher ones, even with four floors, in the early Byzantine period (fifth and sixth centuries).<sup>123</sup> The leases and sales of triclinia, on the other hand, indicate the financial needs of some social groups of the upper and upper middle classes. That parts of urban residences, owned by wealthy individuals, were turned into revenue producing units, is documented in archaeological excavations and literary sources from the early centuries of the Roman empire. But in this early period rented rooms were usually located in upper floors, connected to the street by a separate staircase, or in corners of large

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<sup>118</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 63-64.

<sup>119</sup> *BGU I* 305.14-15; Husson, *OIKIA*, 65.

<sup>120</sup> Husson, *OIKIA*, 77-80.

<sup>121</sup> *SB XIV* 11423.4-5 (6th-7th c.).

<sup>122</sup> Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 59, 143-146. For other references to other excavated sites of the Byzantine empire, cf. J.-P. Sodini, "Habitat de l'antiquité tardive," *Topoi* 5 (1995) 151-218; 7 (1997) 435-577.

<sup>123</sup> Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III*, 115. The situation appears similar in some towns in the Middle East, as in Umm el-Jimal in the Hauran where houses have four floors: Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements in the Negev Desert*, 110.



houses with an entrance separate from that of the owners.<sup>124</sup> Such residential properties included dwellings, workshops and commercial spaces. The contrast with the picture of rented dwellings in early Byzantine Egypt is clear.

Thus the evidence of the papyri, although fragmentary, suggests that not all inhabitants of the poor dwellings installed in the subdivided houses were squatters. It is more likely that they were tenants and that not all of the original owners had fled, abandoning their houses, but many had converted them into income producing properties. This development was a response to the economic needs of the upper class, to the increased demand for accommodation and to cultural changes. We have seen that the situation was similar in the urban public buildings and porticoes flanking avenues: they were often rented to merchants and artisans by the municipalities in order to increase their revenues, or were appropriated by wealthy owners of houses behind the colonnades and turned into commercial, revenue producing units.

The imperial legislation and the papyrological documentation reveal a more complex and certainly more realistic image of the early Byzantine cities. Behind their profound transformation we discern an economic dynamism no longer exclusive to the upper class nor of the international caliber known from the Roman imperial period, but one that is more broadly based at the local level and of a rather limited economic strength. The socio-economic structure and urbanistic features of the cities during the later "dark" centuries are the natural successors to the changes we have traced in the early Byzantine period.

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. A. Wallace-Hadrill, "Elites and Trade in the Roman Town," in *City and Country in the Ancient World*, ed. J. Rich and A. Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York 1991) 241-272; Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture," 356-357.

## Space, Distance and Gender: Authority and the Separation of Communities in the White Monastery

The use of space takes on a particular quality in the context of Coptic communal monasticism. Rather than concentrate on the monks' individual cells, this essay focuses on the authority relationship among the houses that made up the White Monastery, in Late Antique Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The White Monastery is located near modern Sohag, about 250 miles south of Cairo.<sup>2</sup> It gets its modern appellation from the color of its walls, which are white, in contrast with the red walls of a nearby monastery.<sup>3</sup> Although there is

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the paper I delivered at the annual meeting of ARCE in Ann Arbor, Michigan. That paper, in turn, is based on my doctoral dissertation. Since I have been asked to limit my article to the paper as it was delivered, I have had to leave various assertions about monastic life in the White Monastery, and women's life in particular, as brief as they were in that paper. I have, however, used the footnotes to refer the reader to larger discussions of these topics as they appear in my dissertation (Rebecca Krawiec, "Women's Life in Shenute's White Monastery: A Study in Late Antique Egyptian Monasticism" [Ph.D. diss., Yale Univ., 1996]). This article, then, serves as a window into the entirety of my dissertation, rather than providing a segment of just one chapter. For other general descriptions of women's life in Shenute's White Monastery cf. Johannes Leipoldt, *Schenute von Atripe und die Entstehung des national ägyptischen Christentums* TU 25.1 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1903) 92-158 and Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994) 296-310, which itself is dependent on Leipoldt. I should note, however, that some changes have been made as a result of presenting this paper to the Seminar on Religions in the Ancient Mediterranean at Brown University, Providence Rhode Island, on October 7, 1997. I am grateful to the participants for their criticisms and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> See Plate 8 of the present volume; and also Map 9, "The Monasteries of the Upper Sa'id," in vol. 8, *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991). To determine how far the monastery is from Cairo, one needs also to consult maps 7 and 8.

<sup>3</sup> Shenute seems to have called the monastery simply "the congregations." Archaeologists now tend to call it the "Monastery of Apa Shenute." For a

limited archaeological evidence from excavations of the White Monastery,<sup>4</sup> my focus is on the letters written by its third leader, or archimandrite: a man named Shenute, who served from 385-464, until his death at the age of 118.<sup>5</sup> Shenute's literary works were collected and transmitted in two large units: (i) nine collections (*Canons*) of letters, which Shenute addressed either to the whole monastery, to the men's or women's communities, or to individuals; (ii) public sermons (*Discourses*), which he preached throughout his tenure as archimandrite of the White Monastery.<sup>6</sup>

The nine *Canons* are our main source of information about the functioning (and dysfunctioning) of Shenute's monastery, giving "a detailed view of him as a monk, father of the monastery, prophet of doom for the sinners in his community and prophet of salvation for those who repent."<sup>7</sup> Throughout these canons there are thirteen

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discussion of the use of the two names in scholarship, see Stephen Emmel, "Shenute's Literary Corpus" (Ph.D. diss., Yale Univ., 1993) 17, esp. nn. 31 and 32.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. Coquin, et al., "Dayr Anba Shinudah" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 3:761-70. A good drawing can be found on 767-68 and see 768-69 for a discussion of the monastery's art and architecture. Cf. also Mahmoud Ali Mohammed and Peter Grossmann, "On the Recently Excavated Monastic Buildings in Dayr Anba Shinuda: Archaeological Report," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 30 (1991) 53-64.

<sup>5</sup> There is no agreement on the precise dates for events in Shenute's life. Janet Timbie follows Leipoldt's view (Leipoldt, *Shenute* 42-47) that "Shenute entered the monastery around 370 and took control after the death of Pgol in 388. He accompanied Cyril to Ephesus in 431... [and died] in 451" ("The State of Research on the Career of Shenoute of Atripe," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986] 260). Scholars now date his death later, in 466, following J. F. Bethune-Baker, "The Date of the Death of Nestorius: Shenute, Zacharias, Evagrius," *JThS* 9: 601-2. Emmel has revised these dates somewhat, based on "evidence from his own writings or from those of his immediate successor" (Emmel, "Corpus" 10), suggesting that Shenute was born in 346/47, entered the monastery around the age of nine, became its head a bit earlier than Leipoldt suggests and was aged 118 at the time of his death in 465 (Emmel, "Corpus" 9-11).

<sup>6</sup> Emmel ("Corpus" 104) has used the terms "Canon" and "Discourse" in his reconstruction of the transmission and structure of Shenute's writings.

<sup>7</sup> Emmel, "Corpus" 876.

letters that Shenute wrote either to the female community or to individual women.<sup>8</sup> These thirteen letters describe ten different periods of crisis. Of these thirteen, the four letters in *Canon 2* merit special attention for both literary and historical reasons.<sup>9</sup> This canon is the only one of the nine that contains a preponderance of letters to women, and so provides a window into one period which shaped the lives of the women in the White Monastery under Shenute. Moreover, these letters date from the beginning of Shenute's tenure as archimandrite of the monastery and so the period recorded has the added importance of being the time when Shenute needed to establish his authority as the newly appointed head of the monastery.<sup>10</sup> The other nine record nine different crises, which occurred at various times throughout his rule.<sup>11</sup> It is the

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<sup>8</sup> The corpus of thirteen letters is based on their assignment as letters to women by both Leipoldt and Emmel, although this corpus is briefer than Leipoldt's list records. See Emmel, "Corpus" 1239, for Leipoldt's list, "Briefe an die Nonnen."

<sup>9</sup> The four letters which discuss this crisis are recorded by five different manuscripts. I refer to the manuscript pages by the letter names Emmel has assigned to them: XC, XL, YC, YD and ZE. Emmel has demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that certain fragments previously attributed to Besa should in fact be attributed to Shenute's letters from *Canon 2*; they are contained in K. H. Kuhn, *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, CSCO vol. 157 [Louvain: Imprimerie orientale 1956], 117-26, 131, 132-33 (frag.s 36, 37, 42, 43) (Emmel, "Corpus" 133-39 and 802-17). The rest of the canon remains unpublished. Throughout this study, I have used my revisions of the translations in Kuhn's edition. The amount of revision varies from slight to extensive. All citations will be noted "K. rev." without indication of the extent of my revision. Wherever I cite unpublished sources, I have provided a transcription of the text.

<sup>10</sup> Emmel concludes his summaries of *Canon 1* (802-14) and *Canon 2* (814-23) by saying, "In any case, *Canons 1* and *2* together contain a collection of letters from early in Shenute's career, marking a series of major crises in the ethical development of the monastery as it grew after Pcol's death" (Emmel, "Corpus" 823). In a letter fragment in *Canon 2*, Shenute makes references to his two predecessors, one of whom has died recently (Kuhn, *Besa*, 117-18). An early dating of these letters is supported not only by Emmel's reconstruction but also by the nature of the crisis that they reflect, which is of a type that is more likely to occur at the beginning of a leader's tenure.

<sup>11</sup> The other nine letters spread throughout *Canons 3-9*, with *Canon 6* containing four of the nine. Since I will not be using these letters for this paper, I

initial crisis that is the focus of the present essay because of the opportunity it provides to look at a variety of issues within one period.<sup>12</sup>

In studying space as an historical topic, we tend to examine how the space functioned but in my case we will be examining how the space was filled. When creating a mental picture of a monastery, scholars have focused on the large central church building that survives at the site of the White Monastery.<sup>13</sup> However, it is clear from the evidence in the letters, and from the excavations, that the monastery consisted of two communities, or "congregations" as Shenute called them, comprising 2200 men and 1800 women.<sup>14</sup> Individual houses, each with its own leader, were collected into one male and one female community.<sup>15</sup> These two

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have omitted bibliographic reference to the publication and manuscript traditions for each. For such information, see Krawiec, "Women's Life" 48-57, nn. 8-14.

<sup>12</sup> I do not discuss all the elements of the conflicts recorded in the four letters, but limit myself to those details which pertain to conflicts between Shenute and the women. There are other conflicts recorded in the letters which are important to an understanding of life in the women's community of the White Monastery but this topic is broader than the parameters of this paper will allow.

<sup>13</sup> Leipoldt, *Schenute* 92-93 describes the building and its setting. Later, he compares the "fortress-like" appearance of the building with what he considers the militaristically regulated life within it (Leipoldt, *Schenute* 99). He also cites both Alfred J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1884), 351-59, and J. Grafton Milne, *A History of Egypt under Roman Rule* (London: Mehtuen, 1933) 101, 104, 156, 157, for descriptions and pictures of the church building.

<sup>14</sup> Leipoldt cites the Arabic *Life of Shenute* (Va 331) for these numbers (Leipoldt, *Schenute* 93). He also proposes several reasons for accepting this estimate as accurate: (i) in comparison to the numbers of refugees from the foreign invasions, 4000 seems a small enough portion of the population to be acceptable; (ii) the physical layout of the monastic communities is extensive enough to house 4000 monks.

<sup>15</sup> The positions of authority had titles, "elder" and "house-person" (which Leipoldt calls "house-leader") but people in authority were often simply called "father" or "mother." Thus, a woman called "mother" could have held a variety of positions of authority but if called "the elder," only one. Elm has given a general description of the monastery's hierarchy, but omits the mothers of the houses and the overlap between the elder as mother and the house-leaders as mother: "The female community followed the same organizational principles as the male ones. It was guided by a 'mater et anus' or 'mother and elder (*thllo*),' who was, in turn,

communities were, however, situated at some distance from one another: the men's houses were closer to the desert, while the women's community is often referred to as being "in the village."<sup>16</sup> The actual distance between the two communities remains unclear; there is evidence that when men went to the women's community in order to fix houses or do some sort of labor, they occasionally had to spend the night.<sup>17</sup> However, they also had food sent to them during these periods, suggesting it was not more than a day's journey (for the food to arrive) between the two communities.

My purpose in this essay is to examine how Shenute, as newly appointed head of the monastery, reacted to this space that divided the monastery along gender lines and the impact of Shenute's actions on the monastic experience of the women during the initial

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assisted by a 'second' and a committee of elder sisters" (Elm, *Virgins* 302). See Krawiec, "Women's Life" 94-98 for further discussion.

<sup>16</sup> Leipoldt, *Schenute* 92-3 and 95-7. The location of the women's community was taken by Leipoldt to be in the village. The rule material often makes reference to the "village," saying that some rule should also be followed by "those in the village." It also occasionally refers to the "female elder who is in the village" (Johannes Leipoldt and W.E. Crum, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia* [Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1906-13] 4:81), on at least one occasion to the "congregation which is in the village" (Leipoldt, *Sinuthius* 4:107) and on another to the "community of the brethren which is in the village" (Leipoldt, *Sinuthius* 4:69). As Elm points out, there may have been two communities of women, one in the village and one not, given a reference Shenute makes to two different mothers (Leipoldt, *Sinuthius* 4:108). Since there has not been any significant archaeological excavation of the remains of the White Monastery (or at least not of what can be identified as the women's community), Shenute's elliptical phrases remain a mystery for the time being. Elm, *Virgins* 290, notes that Pachomius also built the female community for his monastic system closer to the village; cf. 299, for her discussion of the problem of locating the women's community.

<sup>17</sup> One rule in *Canon* 5 reads: "Moreover when some of the brothers go south to the community of brethren in the village to spend a few days there building a holy place or doing any similar task, and when it is necessary for them to sleep there until they finish, they shall have sent to them what is necessary for their meals from our community in this place. They shall not be given any dishes of food from you [women], nor shall [the brothers] be permitted to see the [women] while they are working. Rather, they shall enter their own houses and rest there more than they do here daily, until they finish working there" (Leipoldt, *Sinuthius* 4: 69).

phase of his leadership. There are three parts to my examination: first, I plan to look at how the space affected Shenute's abilities to be an active leader for the women's community.<sup>18</sup> Second, I will reconstruct what I can of the women's response to Shenute's leadership. Finally, I will consider how the space implicitly made gender a decisive factor in shaping the monastic experience of the women.

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When Shenute became head of the White Monastery in 385, he inherited a legacy of leadership from his two male predecessors that was shaped by a lack of interest in, or perhaps concern for, the women's community.<sup>19</sup> Although the monastery was founded with both male and female members, there seems not to have been any

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<sup>18</sup> Space also affected Shenute's leadership of the men, since he chose to live as a hermit outside the monastery and so led both communities through visits and letters (cf. Emmel, "Corpus" 799). The situation with the women, however, invokes gender in the particular circumstances of Shenute's visits and in the women's response to Shenute's leadership, including his use of male envoys as alternative male leaders for the female community.

<sup>19</sup> We know that Shenute's predecessors did not visit the women, suggesting that they were not interested in being an authoritative presence in that community (XC 221 [Kuhn, *Besa*, 117-18]). One possible exception may predate the formation of the community in the White Monastery. In his defence of his visits (discussed below), Shenute lists a variety of men, whom he includes in his exoneration from responsibility for the women's sins. Eventually this list will include every male monk in the men's community, thereby confining the consequence of the women's transgressions to their own community. In this list, Shenute names "[our] reverend [father], Apa Pshoi, and all the elders..., for he, for his part also, did not refrain from speaking the truth to you, when he came to see you [women] many times" (XC 222 [Kuhn, *Besa*, 118], K rev.). This piece of evidence is incompatible with Shenute's assertions about his predecessors (n. 21 below). It seems that this must be a reference to the founder or patron anchorite of the nearby "Red Monastery" and must refer to a time before the two communities had fully formed. It is intriguing that Apa Pshoi's example was not followed by the heads of the White Monastery, once the female community was part of their monastic system. I am grateful to Stephen Emmel for discussion of this piece of evidence, which remains somewhat puzzling (personal correspondence of October 14, 1997).

authority relationship between the two communities, male and female, until the time of Shenute. The male founder of the monastery did not visit the women's community, and Shenute's immediate predecessor only went to deliver the materials for the Eucharist.<sup>20</sup> But on those occasions, he did not meet with the women and, according to Shenute's account, had no interest in having discussions with the women.<sup>21</sup>

As third archimandrite of the monastery, however, Shenute made dramatic changes in the relationship he had with the female community. Within the first years of his tenure,<sup>22</sup> he made at least three visits to the women in order to address and correct what he saw as erroneous behavior on their part.<sup>23</sup> Shenute saw this change, and these visits, as an improvement for the women because they ensured better leadership and therefore increased the women's chances of being deemed worthy of salvation on Judgment Day.<sup>24</sup> The women, in Shenute's view, were in clear violation of the things

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<sup>20</sup> Shenute became archimandrite following the death of his predecessor, Ebonh, who was the second head of the monastery, after the monastery's founder, Pcol. Ebonh's tenure is lost to history. Most scholars believe that Shenute's predecessor was his uncle, Pcol. Emmel has argued, however, that Shenute was the third rather than the second archimandrite of the White Monastery. His argument is based on evidence from *Canon 1*, which he summarizes on 802-14, esp. 811-12. Ebonh is the hypothetical name which Emmel assigns to Shenute's predecessor.

<sup>21</sup> "Who among our fathers from the beginning came to you (pl.), commanding to you an oath from the Lord? Or on which day did our first father, who has [died], come to you, speaking with you in person as a witness to you? Or which time did he ever come, speaking to you concerning these things? Or our other reverend father [come], the one who has recently [died], except about this thing only, that he come and appoint the eucharist, and he then left and went away without having seen you" (XC 221 [Kuhn, *Besa* 117-118] K. rev.).

<sup>22</sup> The crisis these letters address lasted at least three years, possibly more. See Emmel, "Corpus" 817.

<sup>23</sup> Early in *Canon 2*, Shenute mentions the three visits in connection with "the affliction which came upon me as I was speaking with you" (ⲱⲁⲣⲱⲧⲏⲛ ⲛⲱⲟⲙⲛⲧ ⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲉⲧⲃⲉⲛⲧⲓⲉⲣⲁⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲑⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲗⲱⲛ ⲉⲓⲗⲟⲟⲥ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲙⲧⲛ [ZE 68: ii.5-12]).

<sup>24</sup> The way Shenute presented his leadership to support this claim is explored below. The implications these changes had for the effects of gender on the authority structures of the monastery can be found in Krawiec, "Women's Life" 189-91.



required of the monastic life. Without his leadership, he seems to have believed the women could—and probably would—remain mired in transgressions which would result in eternal damnation. For example, in the earliest conflict recorded, the women were arguing about the distribution of material goods in their community, namely, two different types of clothing, sheep-hides, food or “any other material possession at all.”<sup>25</sup> Shenute argued that these materials should be distributed equally, without regard to monastic rank and especially without regard to any biological relationship among the monks: “Whether a male elder or a senior female monk, whether a junior male monk or a junior female monk, whether blood relatives, or strangers, or orphans who do not have kin among us.”<sup>26</sup> It was perfectly possible, in Shenute’s theology, even for monks to lose their salvation, if the monastic life were led incorrectly. Therefore, in his vision of the monastery, Shenute’s increased interest and involvement in the female community was decidedly to their soteriological advantage.

Shenute’s visits to the female community were a physical solution to the physical problem of the space that separated the men’s and women’s communities in the White Monastery. The space was a problem for Shenute because it was filled, as it were, with female autonomy; their self-governance stood in direct contrast to Shenute’s view of his own leadership as superior to theirs. His disapproval of the women’s autonomy, however, does not at this time focus on their gender and Shenute did not see his visits as gendered, that is, as a violation of the separation of male and female monks.<sup>27</sup> Shenute may have faced similar issues of

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<sup>25</sup> ΕΙΤΕ ΟΥΖΟΙΤΕ ΕΙΤΕ ΟΥΠΡΗΩ ΕΙΤΕ ΟΥΩΛΑΡΗ ΕΟΟΥ ΕΙΤΕ ΟΥΖΝΑΔΥ ΝΟΥΩΜ ΕΙΤΕ ΘΕΛΑΔΥ ΝΩΝΔΥ ΕΠΤΗΡΥ (ZE 63: ii.19-26). At this point, the manuscript becomes too damaged to read. Other possibilities are lost in the lacuna, although this does seem to be the end of the list.

<sup>26</sup> ΕΙΤΕ ΕΥΖΑΛΟ ΠΕ ΕΙΤΕ ΕΥΝΟΣ ΝΩΙΜΕ ΤΕ ΕΙΤΕ ΕΥΩΗΡΕ ΩΗΜ ΠΕ ΕΙΤΕ ΕΥΩΕΡΕ ΩΗΜ ΤΕ ΕΙΤΕ ΕΖΕΝΚΑΤΑΔΑΡΖ ΝΤΕΤΥΗΤΝ ΝΕ ΕΙΤΕ ΕΖΕΝΩΜΜΟ ΝΕ Η ΖΕΝΟΡΦΑΝΟC ΕΜΝΤΟΥΡΩΜΕ ΜΜΔΥ ΖΡΑΙ ΝΩΗΤΝ (ZE 63: ii.2-15). The terms, ΩΗΡΕ ΩΗΜ and ΩΕΡΕ ΩΗΜ are here used as monastic terms for monks who were either still novitiates, or newer members of the monastery.

<sup>27</sup> In a later letter, Shenute will invoke the women’s gender in his condemnation of their independent actions. Cf. Krawiec, “Women’s Life” 208-26.

autonomy in his absence with the male community, from which he lived apart. However, that this space represented gender for the women is apparent in their response to Shenute during these visits. Unfortunately for Shenute, his visits created a large enough controversy (for reasons we will examine below), that he had to discontinue them, at least temporarily.

That he is no longer visiting the women to chastise them is apparent in his later warnings to the women. At one point, he cautions the women that on Judgment Day he would be close to them, rather than being separated from them as he is now: "And I will reproach you, not separated from you as I am in this world, and not distant, but only a footstep away."<sup>28</sup> On another occasion later in this same crisis, Shenute viewed the women's behavior as so disruptive that he threatened to visit the women, even though it was not proper for him to do so: "If I come to you angrily, I will not spare you as before.... But it is not [proper] for me to come to you boldly, in person, on account of this precept to speak with you in person and to see you face to face except in a great matter of difficulty which gains importance from God."<sup>29</sup> Even in the later crises, Shenute seems rarely to have visited the women for the purpose of chastising and correcting them, as he had in these first three visits. Rather, his later visits were all more like gatherings, with shared meals and (apparently) conversations about life in the monastery. Some of these discussions were heated and the result of divisions in the monastic community, but Shenute's reasons for visiting the women seem to have changed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> XC 223 (Kuhn, *Besa* 118), K. rev.

<sup>29</sup> YD 197 (Kuhn, *Besa* 131), K. rev.

<sup>30</sup> For example, in a later description in *Canon* 2, Shenute describes a visit that is fraught with division: his "pain afflicts me greatly." Whenever he "sits down at a table to eat or to drink... when I eat bread and drink water, I know to sit in that place" (ΕΤΡΑΞΜΟΟΣ ΕΞΡΑΪ ΞΑΝΘΟΥΤΡΑΠΕΖΑ ΕΟΥΩΜ Η ΕΣΩ... ΑΥΩ ΤΑΙ ΤΕ ΘΕ ΕΩΛΙΟΥΩΜ ΜΠΟΕΙΚ ΑΥΩ ΝΤΑΣΩ ΜΠΙΜΟΥ ΕΩΛΙΣΟΟΥ ΕΞΜΟΟΣ ΕΞΡΑΪ ΞΜΠΜΑ{Ε} ΕΤΜΜΑΥ [XC 253: ii. 1-17]). It seems that as a result of the argument, Shenute was not allowed, or did not allow himself to sit with the women. The conflict happened at a time when Shenute was accusing the women, again, of not being repentant enough for some behavior: "I think that [Papnute, the male elder and the brothers] are greater than you in repentance and compassion and that wretched

Once he abandoned visits aimed at correcting the women in person, Shenute had to use letters to establish his authority, and to be able to chastise and counsel the women in ways he could not do in person.<sup>31</sup> Shenute's letters filled the space separating him from the women with a discourse of monastic power, begun in the initial crisis and developed throughout the rest of his tenure.<sup>32</sup> His discourse focused on a self-presentation as a prophet and as a suffering servant, two biblical images that implied a high level of power and authority.

Shenute clearly thought of himself as a prophet, and acted accordingly, before the problems over his visits arose.<sup>33</sup> In fact, in one of those first visits, Shenute tore his cloak as a sign of frustration and grief over the women's errors and resistance to his corrections; Shenute explains that he tore his cloak in front of the women "because we were not able to tear our heart in place of our cloak."<sup>34</sup> Such an action is in perfect keeping with the actions of the

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person, who is I, is not worthy to be counted among humans" (ΤΜΕ ΕΥΕΔΕ ΔΥΡΘΟΥ ΕΡΩΤῆΝ ΘΝΟΥΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΔ ΜΝ ΟΥΜΝΤΩΔΑΝΘΤΗΥ ΔΥΩ ΠΙΕΒΙΗΝ ΕΤΜΠΩΔ ΔΝ ΝΟΠΥ ΕΡΩΜΕ ΕΤΕΔΝΟΚ ΠΕ [XC 253: i. 7-14]). Nevertheless, Shenute does not seem to have visited the women because of this conflict, in an effort to correct their behavior, as he did earlier. Rather, his visits now seem to be limited to official gatherings, and his chastisements and instructions limited to letters and proxy visits by the male elder (below).

<sup>31</sup> Of course, even in the letters which record Shenute's rebuttal to the women's objections to his visits, he has begun to develop his discourse of power. In the first section of *Canon 2*, then, there is an overlap between the means Shenute had tried to be an active authority in the women's community—the visits, now abandoned but still a source of controversy—and the means he has now turned to—the letters. See Krawiec, "Women's Life" 77-83.

<sup>32</sup> Again, my focus in this paper is merely on illustrative examples from the four letters written early in Shenute's tenure as archimandrite. Later conflicts were over a number of aspects of monastic life, including corporal punishment, ascetic standards for fasting, definitions and duties of the proper monastic life, and authority within the women's community. Shenute's rhetoric is complex in part because it responds to this variety of issues.

<sup>33</sup> See Krawiec, "Women's Life" 55-73 for his self-presentation as a prophet.

<sup>34</sup> ΕΙΕ ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΘΕ ΔΝΟΝ ΕΝΝΑΠΩΩ ΔΝ ΝΝΕΝΘΟΙΤΕ ΕΡΠΑΙ ΕΔΝΝΕΝΝΟΒΕ ΕΒΟΧ ΔΕ ΜΠΠΝΕΩΩΜΕΩΜ ΕΠΩΩ ΜΠΠΕΝΘΗΤ (XC 219: i. 3-9). This phrase recalls Joel 2:13. Thanks are due to Shaye Cohen for providing this citation. Examples of tearing clothing

prophets of the Bible. Shenute's self-presentation as a prophet also included claims to having an alliance with God that granted him the authority to be head of the monastery. Two examples show these claims. First, he contended that the rules he set for the monastic life were given to him by God. Shenute described the reception of these rules "inside the veil, upon the altar of the Lord; you have transgressed the words which I have commanded in the presence of God."<sup>35</sup> Second, he claimed that he would be the women's judge at the end of time, as he stood alongside God and Jesus: "Thus, behold, I will stand and reproach you in the presence of the throne of God's glory.... Therefore I tell you that I will reproach you face to face in the presence of the Lord Jesus."<sup>36</sup>

Although Shenute seems to have accepted, for whatever reasons, the limits the women placed on his visits, he responded by using God as a means of uniting the authority of the two separated communities. As followers of God, the women (Shenute argued) needed to accept that Shenute, as head of the monastery, had a relationship with God that they lacked and that therefore justified the changes Shenute was making. In short, Shenute sought to create a power structure in which he had the favor of God; based on that alliance, Shenute, and only Shenute, had access to knowledge about what God's will was for life in the White Monastery.

The second part of Shenute's monastic discourse of power was a rhetoric of suffering, specifically suffering that resulted from the service he performed as head of the monastery.<sup>37</sup> Although his references to himself as "a wretched brother" might seem to indicate a self-denigration, his discourse in fact functioned to provide him with authority over the women. His "wretchedness" was meant to indicate his greater devotion to the monastic life, and his greater ability as a monk.

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as a gesture of grief and frustration come from both the Old Testament (see Job 1:20 for one example) and the New (see Acts 13).

<sup>35</sup> XC 222 (Kuhn, *Besa* 118), K. rev.

<sup>36</sup> XC 223 (Kuhn, *Besa* 118), K. rev.

<sup>37</sup> See Krawiec, "Women's Life," 73-77 for a wider treatment of Shenute's rhetoric as suffering servant.

Shenute used a rhetoric of suffering both to elevate his status as a sufferer and to ridicule his opponents as carefree and without regard for their salvation. His suffering was integral to his identity not just as a monk, but as the best head of the monastery. The women, in contrast, were described as in danger of damnation through their lack of commitment to the suffering nature of the monastic life. At one point in the initial crisis, Shenute referred to his instructions to the women and the pain their actions were causing him:

"These things I say weeping, even as I have wept many times before and still do now... our little brother, the scribe, is troubled and he too weeps, because he sees me weep, as my tears flow over my cheeks and [fall] down upon the ground... but I tell you that I, your wretched brother am sick at heart, and I have pity on you. But you are not sick at heart over what you have done, nor do you pity yourselves, o wretched ones... I tell you I often weep until I can no longer, because I am so sick at heart."<sup>38</sup>

Shenute engaged in a discourse of suffering to describe his conflict with his followers. The female monks' inability to suffer and pity themselves will lead, in Shenute's opinion, to their being deserted at the day of judgment: "No one among all the saints will have pity on you at the time of your need."<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Shenute's suffering, eloquently described at some length, gave him the moral authority to act as their judge, even though he did not live in the same community as they.

Shenute's development of his authority in response to the space that separated the two communities, male and female, is clear. His actions, at first, and his language throughout, filled the space between him and the women with his own authority; in this way he tried to make the monastery a "single body" as he would later call it.<sup>40</sup> A single body has only one head, and Shenute's perception of

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<sup>38</sup> XC 226-228 (Kuhn, *Besa* 120-21), K. rev.

<sup>39</sup> XC 227 (Kuhn, *Besa* 121), K. rev.

<sup>40</sup> "We and you are limbs to our companions and we form a single body in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Dwight Young, *Coptic Manuscripts from the White Monastery: Works of Shenute* 2 vols. [Vienna: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 1993] 96-7

his role as archimandrite fits his metaphorical language. As with his visits, Shenute does not present his role in gendered terms, most notably in that he does not use a misogynist rhetoric as a means to altering the authority structures. The women's response, however, does involve gender. Not only did they stage a program of resistance to Shenute's expanding authority but this resistance included reactions to Shenute as a man, and not just as a monk. The space that created a problem for Shenute was not a problem for the women, and in fact seems to have been protected by them.<sup>41</sup>

Prior to Shenute's leadership, the women were living in a monastic community with an arrangement that was much like that of several other monasteries in late antiquity, in Egypt and also in Palestine.<sup>42</sup> We know from these examples that the lack of a frequent, or active, male leader could allow women to develop their own leadership and their own monastic experience.<sup>43</sup> We do not know how many years had passed from the founding of the monastery to Shenute's appointment as third head of the monastery. However, we can presume that the women of the White Monastery had their own leadership, hierarchy, expectations of the monastic life, ascetic habits, and so on, well in place by the time Shenute made his changes. Indeed, the women's response to Shenute's initial visits supports this speculation. His descriptions of the visits indicate that they were met with arguments over the changes he was trying to make and eventually to controversy about

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[109]). Y. rev. Throughout this study, I have used my revisions of the translations in Dwight Young's edition. The amount of revision varies from slight to considerable. All such citations will be noted "Y. rev." without indication of the extent of my revision.

<sup>41</sup> For the variety of ways the women protected their community, see Krawiec, "Women's Life," 99-100 and 103-17.

<sup>42</sup> For a comparison between the effects of gender on the authority structures in the White Monastery and other forms of Late Antique monasticism, see Krawiec, "Women's Life," 197-208.

<sup>43</sup> For a good discussion of the limited presentation of female authority in other forms of Late Antique monasticism elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, see Elizabeth Clark, "Authority and Humility: A Conflict of Values in Fourth-Century Female Monasticism" in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*. Studies in Women and Religion, 20. (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1986) 209-228.

the visits themselves. One must note as a caveat, of course, that modern historians only have access to the women's response through Shenute's accounts, a source that must be accepted with some caution given his own agenda.

These visits did not go well, so much so that Shenute describes "the affliction which came upon us as I was speaking with you."<sup>44</sup> Later he mentions the visits (whether these same three or later ones is not clear) with a great rhetorical flourish about how he made the visits despite the fact that they exacerbated his illness and caused him great suffering.<sup>45</sup> For two of these three visits, Shenute arrived in the evening and ended up spending the night in the women's community.<sup>46</sup> He appears to have been accompanied by senior male monks, one named Papnute and one sharing his name of Shenute.<sup>47</sup> Although his accounts focus on his own role, it is evident that the visits were not solving whatever problems that were being addressed. Instead, the visits themselves became a source of conflict.

The reasons for the women's objections to Shenute's visits are not explicit, save one. For whatever reason, at least one female monk did not respond to Shenute's action of tearing his cloak (which I discussed earlier) in its intended meaning. Rather than understanding his action as an imitation of his biblical role models, one female monk seems to have interpreted it in sexual terms. It is

<sup>44</sup> ΕΤΒΕΠΠΕΙΡΑCΜΟC ΕΝΤΑΦΕΙ ΕΞΡΑΪ ΕΞΩΝ ΕΪCΟΟC ΜΜΟC ΝΗΤΝ (ZE 68: ii.8-12).

<sup>45</sup> In XC 219: ii. 20-21 there is a "great sickness" upon Shenute; in XC 219: ii. 22-25, he "walks on my feet because of the great pain in me."

<sup>46</sup> "And after we did these things, and others, among you, we came and we went during the night after dawn had passed. Once again we came to you a third time... and after we spent all night talking to you, not in multitudes of words from the Scriptures" (ΔΥΩ ΝΑΪ ΜΝΖΕΝΚΟΟΥΕ ΝΤΕΡΝΔΔΥ ΖΑΤΝΤΗΥΤΝ ΔΥΩ ΔΝΕΙ ΕΒΟΧ ΔΝΒΩΚ ΞΝΤΕΥΩΗ ΕΤΜΜΔΥ ΔΥΩ ΝΤΕΡΕΖΤΟΟΥΕ ΟΥΕΙΝΕ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΟΝ ΔΝΕΙ ΩΡΑΥΤΝ ΜΠΜΕΖΩΟΜΝΤ ΝCΟΠ ΕΡΕΟΥΝΟC ΝΩΩΝΕ ΖΙΔΩΝ ΔΥΩ ΝΕΪΜΟΟΩΕ ΠΕ ΖΝΝΔΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ ΕΤΒΕΠΕΜΚΔΖ ΕΤΖΜΠΑΔΗΤ ΔΥΩ ΝΤΕΡΝΠΤΕΥΩΗ ΤΗΡC ΕΝΔΩ ΝΗΤΝ ΝΖΕΝΜΗΗΩΕ ΔΝ ΝΩΔΔΕ ΕΒΟΧ ΖΝΝΕΓΡΑΦΗ [XC 219: ii.10-30]). Shenute here switches between "we" and "I"; the "we" could either be a plural self-reference, which is not uncommon in Shenute's rhetoric, or could include the male elders who accompanied Shenute on some of these visits.

<sup>47</sup> Shenute included these two men in his defense of his visits: "Shenute also and Papnute are innocent of your blood" (XC 221 [Kuhn, *Besa* 117], K. rev.).

unclear whether she perceived it as a sexual threat, or a sexual overture. The woman's accusation is vaguely worded: "What's wrong with you, that you tear your garments?"<sup>48</sup> But it must have been sexual in nature because Shenute, while discussing the accusation, also defended his virginity to the women: "But we did not ever do that which the world does, either in illicit sex, or in honored marriage, or in a bed undefiled."<sup>49</sup> In addition, he makes a not-so-veiled threat against his accuser: "And I was very angry in my heart, most wrathfully... that she said this thing... and the Lord knows that, except that I refrained because of the mercy of the Lord, I would tear her garments in half on her body."<sup>50</sup>

Besides their reaction to the visits, the women also used the space between Shenute and themselves to protect their own authority. The women could do so by failing to report events, mainly transgressions, to Shenute.<sup>51</sup> The women therefore removed themselves from the surveillance that was necessary for Shenute to have the authority he wanted. At one point during this initial phase, Shenute wrote to the women: "Is it your heart's desire to see us [in the afterlife] just as we wish to see you? Then why do you not pay attention to my instruction which I told you with my own mouth, 'Do not hide anything among yourselves from us, but communicate it to us that we may judge it.... Why do you refrain from telling us what goes on among you?'"<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Shenute

<sup>48</sup> ΝΤΕΡΕΟΥΕΙ ΜΜΩΤΝ ΔΟΟC ΝΔΙ ΔΕ ΔΡΡΟΚ ΕΚΠΩΞ ΝΝΕΖΟΙΤΕ (XC 219: i.12-16).

<sup>49</sup> XC 221 (Kuhn, *Besa* 117). K. rev. It is at this point that he includes Papnute and Shenute, as well as other male monks, in his defense.

<sup>50</sup> ΔΥΩ ΔΝΟΚ ΔΙΝΟΥΕC ΕΜΑΤΕ ΘΜΠΑΖΗΤ ΘΝΟΥΝΟC ΝΟΡΓΗ ΔΕΟΥ ΜΟΝΟΝ ΔΕ ΔCΧΕΠΑΙ ΔΛΛΑ ΔΕΝΤΟC ΘΩΩC ΟΝ ΝΕΠΕΤΕΩΛΕ ΕΡΟC ΠΕ ΕΤΡΕCΤΩΞ ΜΠΕCΖΗΤ ΕΝΕΟΥΝΕΟΜ ΠΕ ΔΥΩ ΝΕCΖΟΙΤΕ ΔΝ ΔΥΩ ΠΔΟΕΙC CΟΟΥΝ ΔΕΝCΑΒΗΛ ΔΕΔΙΤ CΟ ΕΤΒΕΠΝΑ ΜΠΔΟΕΙC ΝΕΙΝΑΡΝΕCΖΟΙΤΕ ΜΠΟCΕ CΝ[Τ]Ε ΕΖΡΑΙ ΘΙΩΩC (XC 219: i.16-32).

<sup>51</sup> The secrecy the women engaged in was one means of using space to protect their authority in their community (above, n. 37). For the specific issue of secrecy, see Krawiec, "Women's Life" 110-12.

<sup>52</sup> XC 233-234 (Kuhn, *Besa* 125). K. rev. The later portions of *Canon* 2, which I have not included in this discussion, refer to a number of conflicts among the women, nearly all of which pertain to the distribution of food. The conflict between Shenute's leadership and the women's had now become more adversarial than earlier. Shenute warned the monks that God will have to judge which



makes clear that they do not just need to make these reports to him, but must do so through the male envoys whom he will send. The women refrained from telling Shenute and the male monks because by doing so they could use the space to protect their own authority against his attempts to overcome the space in establishing his own, through the male envoys.<sup>53</sup> The role of the male envoys is particularly important because it highlights the difference between the male and female experience of being separate from Shenute as their head. With the women, there was not a direct link between them and Shenute, as with the men, but there was the intermediate step of being subject to male monks, who may have even had the same monastic rank as they.<sup>54</sup>

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leadership is better (ΕΩΞΕ ΝΤΩΤΝ ΔΕ ΤΕΤΝΟΟΥΤΩΝ ΕΜΑΤΕ ΜΠΕΜΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΙΔΟΕΙC ΕΔΝΟΚ ΔΕ ΠΕΤΘΟΥC ΝΝΔΡΑΥ ΕΙΕ ΜΑΡΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ CΩΤΜ ΕΠΕΤΝΩ)ΛΗ ΔΑΤΕΤΗΥΤΝ [YD 205: i.6-17]). The women still had authority in their own community in that Shenute looked to them for information about the problems they faced. In addition, they either had autonomy in setting the rules for their own community, or were requesting it be granted: "Pray, did we do something wholly without your judgment? Pray, was it not you (pl.) who sent [us] a letter so that you could establish yourselves according to your (pl.) ordinances?" (ΜΗ ΔΝΡΛΛΔΥ ΝΩΩΒ ΩΟΛΩC ΔΔΝΤΕΤΝΓΝΩΜΗ ΜΗ ΝΤΩΤΝ ΔΝ ΠΕ ΝΤΑΤΕΤΝΤΝΝΟΟΥΝ ΕΤΡΕΤΝΔΩΕΡΑΤΤΗΥΤΝ ΚΑΤΑΝΕΤΝΤΩΩ [YC 175: i.19-27]). In either case, Shenute denied the women the right to set up their own ordinances; instead, he established elders to "set ordinances for you" (ΝΝΩΛΛΟΙ ΕΤΤΗΩ ΝΗΤΝ ΩΑΤΕΤΗΥΤΝ [YD 202: i.9-12]). However, it is unclear what the gender of these elders was, though the implication seems to be that they are male. At least one elder is male, since Shenute ends the letter saying that he is going to send the "male elder" to the women (YC 176: ii. 24-6). The man of this rank, who appears throughout the rest of the letters in later canons, seems to have taken on the role that Shenute shed after the controversy caused by his initial visits.

<sup>53</sup> Shenute's attempts to change the authority structures in the monastery had practical consequences for the women's monastic experience in that Shenute now wanted control over determining the women's corporal punishment and their ascetic standards for fasting. There is evidence that the women were arguing against both these changes during this initial period, but these are arguments that continue in later conflicts as well. For discussion about these changes in the women's monastic experience, as a result of Shenute's changes in the administration of his authority, see Krawiec, "Women's Life" 191-97.

<sup>54</sup> Elm (*Virgins*, 305) makes this same point with reference to the undermining of the authority of the female leader of the female community, whom Shenute made subject to the male elder. Some of the best examples of the

In conclusion then, I would like to focus on how the space between Shenute and the women can be understood in terms of gender. The space between the two communities effectively created a gender boundary that was central to the structure of the monastery.<sup>55</sup> Shenute's visits were meant to bridge the space that hindered his authority; however, in making these visits he transgressed the gender boundary the space represented. Two of the women's responses to the visits make the gender implications of the space clear. First, the female monk's accusation of sexual motivation on Shenute's part shows the confusion the women had over his reason for coming to see them, that is, for crossing the gender boundary.<sup>56</sup> Second, once Shenute began his visits, some women started to visit their male relatives in the men's community, something that had not been allowed under Shenute's predecessors.<sup>57</sup> Shenute was put in the position of having to explain why he was changing one practice—the male leader coming to the female community—but would not allow change in the other—visits by female relatives.<sup>58</sup> His defense rested on the women's motivations in visiting the men: "Altogether, indeed, I see you now, whenever you spend a single month without seeing them, you then

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conflicts between the female leaders and male envoys come from other conflicts during Shenute's tenure, but the beginnings of these conflicts are evident here.

<sup>55</sup> Gender is not inherent in this boundary because it separated the women from Shenute, but because it kept male and female monks separated from each other.

<sup>56</sup> For further discussion of the role of the gender boundary in the relationship between Shenute and the women of the monastery, see Krawiec, "Women's Life" 208-26.

<sup>57</sup> When Shenute outlined the rules about women's movement in the monastery in *Canon 5*, he indicated that some of the rules continue the practice of his predecessors. "No woman among you shall, at any time, come to us in order to visit their blood relatives even if they are sick or have died. Women shall not be permitted to come to visit them or go to their people, as they could formerly, until our first father undertook to prevent any of you from visiting any blood relatives of yours when sick, or to come and see their kin" (Leipoldt, *Sinuthius* 4:61).

<sup>58</sup> The women's response, and the predicament it placed Shenute in, suggest that Shenute could not simply act by *fiat* and that balance and uniformity in the rules were expected.

are upset about them and you wonder because you have not seen them.”<sup>59</sup> In contrast, Shenute claimed that he visited the women in his administrative capacity as head of the monastery, but not because he wished to see them.<sup>60</sup> That is, his visits were not, in his view, gendered. However, it is clear from the women's responses that they experienced them as gendered and so experienced the new authority structures as gendered as well.

Even though he disallowed the women's visits, Shenute sent male relatives to the female community in order for them to collect the reports of activities in the women's community; the women were to communicate “either by means of your elders appointed for you or through all your relatives who are about to be sent to you.”<sup>61</sup> What is most uncertain in Shenute's emerging monastic power structure is whether the “elders” in the female community were women, or men who either resided with the women or visited them regularly.<sup>62</sup> What is certain is that relatives who were “about to be sent” must have been men.<sup>63</sup> Shenute tried to differentiate between visits that *did* transgress the gender boundary and those that did *not*. Those that did were initiated by the women, and were based on emotional motivations; those that did not were approved by Shenute and functioned as part of the authority structures he

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<sup>59</sup> XC 228 (Kuhn, *Besa* 122), K. rev.

<sup>60</sup> “I tell you these things to explain to you that [I] did not come to you because I wished to see you” (ΝΑΙ ΔΕ ΕΙΣΩ ΜΜΟΟΥ ΔΥΩ ΕΙΤΑΜΟ ΜΜΩΤΝ ΔΕ ΝΤΑΝΕΙ ΔΝ ΩΔΡΩΤΝ ΕΝΟΥΩΩ ΝΔΥ ΕΡΩΤΝ [XC 220 ii: 20-24]).

<sup>61</sup> XC 233-234 (Kuhn, *Besa*, 125), K. rev. For further discussion about how this use of administrative visits to allow relatives to see one another affected monastic life, see Krawiec, “Women's Life” 177-80.

<sup>62</sup> Elm argues that there was a male elder who resided permanently among the women. However, the evidence Elm uses for her generalization is based more on Shenute's ideal monastic structure, which seems to have grown out of these early controversies, rather than on the evidence for the struggles over that ideal (Elm, *Virgins*, 302-3). It is also more certain in later conflicts that the male elder, who may not have resided with the women, made regular enough visits to be an established authority figure.

<sup>63</sup> Here also Shenute is allowing men to move between communities in a way that he seems to be reluctant to allow for the women. While there is evidence that the female leaders occasionally visited Shenute, most of the movement seems to have been from the male to the female community.

established to overcome the spatial separation between the two communities.<sup>64</sup>

Shenute's response to the separation of communities in the White Monastery during this initial crisis was complex and set the stage for much of the rest of his leadership, as his accounts of later crises attest. In other words, the initial crisis provides a window into the means Shenute used to establish his authority, and into what methods failed and what authority structures emerged as a result. Because of his belief in his own status as God's prophet, he tried to become an active leader in the women's community to lead them, as well as the men, to salvation. Implicit in his actions, however, was a distrust of independent female authority, which had been the norm under his predecessors. These visits failed to achieve the type of leadership Shenute seems to have been trying to create. As a result, he needed to find other ways to unite the two communities under one authority, even while still maintaining the sexual segregation customary to Late Antique monasticism.

Shenute's reaction to the space, the distance, and the role of gender in the monastery is noteworthy because he had radically different response to that which is seen in other forms of monasticism in the Late Antique Mediterranean world. Rather than allow the women their own sphere of existence, with which he might have had limited contact, Shenute set up authority structures of mutual accountability among the women, and also insisted on their subjugation to the authority of the male elder who was sent to the women's community as a proxy for Shenute himself. The initial crisis, then, ended with Shenute's establishing a system of male surveillance of the female community; we must look to the later crises to see to what extent these new authority structures were successful, both from Shenute's perspective and, to the extent possible, from the women's.

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<sup>64</sup> Likewise, the visits by the male elder did not transgress the gender boundary.

## *Mimesis, Metamorphosis and Representation in Coptic Monastic Cells* (Plates 1-7)

The dry climate of Egypt has preserved a remarkable quantity of evidence about the lives of male and female ascetics in the Late Antique and Early Byzantine periods. Between the fourth and seventh centuries C.E., thousands of Christian men and women chose to retreat from the world to the Egyptian wilderness. Their goal was to achieve salvation and everlasting life in Christ. This way of life was called the *bios angelikos*, or angelic life, and practitioners of it were referred to as angels—by their contemporaries and themselves. As one of its practitioners, Megethios, said: “We were like the angels; we ascended up to the heavens.”<sup>1</sup> Some of these early Christian ascetics lived the lives of hermits, in caves, pagan tombs, or small buildings. Others formed themselves into communities, either constructing new buildings or adapting extant cemeteries to meet their needs. Coptic monks living between the fourth and seventh centuries repeatedly described their cells as a central part of their process of attaining salvation. These cells were painted, sometimes with an astonishing density of images. The purpose of this paper is to consider the monks’ motives for painting these crucially important spaces. Since this topic is well beyond the scope of a short paper, my purpose is only to suggest some of the ways images functioned in the angelic life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, Cistercian Studies no. 59 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975) 126-127.

<sup>2</sup> My dissertation, “The Coptic *Galaktotrophousa* as the Medicine of Immortality” (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1997), includes a somewhat more comprehensive treatment of this topic, and I plan to develop it in the future. Inspiration for this work comes from Gary Vikan, “Pilgrims in Magi’s Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art,” *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990)

The subjects of these paintings, including Christ in Majesty, the angelic virtues and the four incorporeal beings, among others, were chosen by Coptic monks for several reasons. Some were the focus of prayer. Others depicted the visions which these monks were learning to see. It is also my belief that monastic cells were painted because images were one of a group of tools used in pagan and Christian culture to *effect* transformation. Images could represent a being into whom the monks were attempting to transform themselves. A single painting could fulfil several of these roles.

In this paper, I focus on the use of paintings as part of the process of transformation through imitation, with examples from cells 709 and A, from the Monastery of Apa (Father) Jeremiah at Saqqara. While paintings from monastic habitations exist from as early as the fourth century C.E., the paintings from this monastery are usually dated to the sixth-seventh, or possibly eighth century C.E.<sup>3</sup> Although a women's component existed for the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah and other contemporary monasteries, most of the spaces in which women lived have not been identified.<sup>4</sup> Also, the majority of the textual sources were written about male ascetics and monks.<sup>5</sup> I will therefore be discussing an exclusively male audience for these paintings.

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97-107 and Georgia Frank, "The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrimage to Desert Ascetics in the Christian East During the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, "Dayr Apa Jeremiah: Paintings," *Coptic Encyclopedia*, gen. ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1991) 778. Fourth- and fifth-century examples of painted monastic dwellings exist from Kellia. Rassart-Debergh, "Les Peintures," *Les Kellia: Ermitages coptes en Basse-Egypt*, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève, 12 Octobre 1989-7 Janvier 1990 (Geneva: Éditions du Tricorne, 1989) 59.

<sup>4</sup> For the female component at Bawit and Saqqara: Jean Maspero and Étienne Drioton, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouît*, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 59 (Cairo: IFAO, 1931) vi; Peter Grossmann, "Dayr Apa Jeremiah: Archaeology," *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 773.

<sup>5</sup> The principal source used for this study is the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Editions cited include: *Les Apophthegmes des Pères: Collection systématique*, chapitres I-IX, trans. Jean-Claude Guy, SC 387 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1993), F. Nau, "Histoires des solitaires Égyptiens," *ROC*, deuxième série 13 (1908) and Migne, PG 65; translations cited are *The Sayings of the Desert*

A basic pattern existed for the angelic life in the Egyptian wilderness. It consisted of a conjunction of site, private space, and devotional practice. If the pattern were rigorously followed, the monk would ascend a hierarchy of levels, becoming increasingly more spiritual, or angelic. Monks who attained the higher stages of this system could actually see spiritual beings and even God, in the everyday world around them. Thus, images played an important part in the monks' spiritual development.

The required site for the angelic life was the wilderness. This was usually a desert, but its essential characteristic was its separation from secular human society. In Egypt, this meant essentially anywhere away from the Nile. The Monastery of Apa Jeremiah is at Saqqara, not far from the famous Step Pyramid of Djoser, in lower Egypt. The sources reiterate the necessity of having a private space within this wilderness to complete one's retreat from the world. This space is called a cell, and its importance for the process of becoming saved cannot be overemphasized. A few examples from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, or Sayings of the Fathers, will illustrate this point. "A brother questioned Apa Hierax saying, 'Give me a word. How can I be saved?' The old man said to him, 'Sit in your cell, and if you are hungry, eat, if you are thirsty, drink; only do not speak evil of anyone, and you will be saved.'"<sup>6</sup> The same source reports Antony as saying: "Just as fish die if they stay too long out of water, so the monks who loiter outside their cells or pass their time with men of the world lose the intensity of

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*Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, Cistercian Studies no. 59 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975) and E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Paradise or Garden of the Holy Fathers*, 2 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1907). Other sources include: "The Life of John the Almsgiver," and "The Supplement to the Life of John the Almsgiver," in *Three Byzantine Saints*, trans. Elizabeth Dawes and Norman H. Baynes (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948); Philotheus on Apse Decorations, from: P. P. V. Van Moorsel, "The Vision of Philotheus (on Apse Decorations)," *Nubische Studien*, ed. Martin Krause (Mainz am Rhein: Philip von Zabern, 1982) 337-340; *Mena of Nikiou: The Life of Isaac of Alexandria and the Martyrdom of St. Macrobius*, trans. D. N. Bell, Cistercian Studies no. 107 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988); and *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius by Paphnutius*, trans. Tim Vivian, Cistercian Studies, no. 140 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Ward 89.

inner peace.”<sup>7</sup> Another excerpt characterizes the cell as an exclusive zone of silent retreat from the world. “Apa Macarius the Alexandrian said unto the brethren who were with him, ‘Brethren, flee,’ And the brethren said, ‘Father, how can we flee more than [in coming] to the desert?’ and he laid his hand upon his mouth, and said unto them, ‘Flee ye in this manner,’ and straightaway every man fled to his cell and held his peace.”<sup>8</sup> Isaac, a priest from the region simply called “The Cells,” or Kellia, describes the cell as a place which should be kept free of distracting thoughts. He said: “I have never allowed a thought against my brother who has grieved me to enter my cell; I have seen to it that no brother should return to his cell with a thought against me.”<sup>9</sup> These sayings and others identify the central importance of the cell for the monk’s spiritual progress.<sup>10</sup> The cell was a place which should be kept free of distractions. Since the space of the cell, where a monk could practice in silence and with privacy, was so important to this way of life, the paintings in it must have had a serious purpose.

No set pattern existed for the physical shape of the cell. It could be an isolated cave, a self-contained complex of rooms, or a single-roomed, free-standing building. It could also be a small room in a labyrinthine construction, such as the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah (plate 1). The textual sources do not differentiate between these kinds of habitations, describing what the monk *did* in the cell, and not its physical characteristics. An analysis of the material remains of these constructions yields an element of similarity within this architectural variety. With the possible exception of reused tombs, all monastic dwellings have a room with a prominent painted niche in its eastern wall. Most of these depict Christ in human or symbolic form (plate 2). The eastern orientation of this painted niche, its form—very like a miniature church apse—and its subject all point to the space in front of it as a place for prayer. Ritualized Christian prayer was undertaken facing east, whether in a formal

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<sup>7</sup> Ward 2.

<sup>8</sup> Budge, 2:321.

<sup>9</sup> Ward 86.

<sup>10</sup> Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 150-152.



ritual in a church, or in a private room.<sup>11</sup> Apa Arsenius of Scetis is described spending the whole night from Saturday evening to Sunday morning with his arms upraised in prayer. He began with the sun at his back, and ended when it shone on his face the next morning.<sup>12</sup> While the term cell could be used to refer to a multi-roomed monastic dwelling, I will be using it to refer to these spaces with painted eastern niches, intended for private spiritual work.

The ultimate goal of these monks was to obtain salvation from death. They and other Christians did this by attempting to *become* Christ, although monks pursued this goal more relentlessly than did most Christians. Apa Apollo instructed the monks to prostrate themselves in front of each other, because: "When you see your brother, you see the Lord your God."<sup>13</sup> A painting from cell A shows a monk in *proskynesis* before Apa Apollo, treating him as if he were Christ (plate 3). Apollo so successfully imitated Christ that he became one with Christ while still walking about the world in his physical body. We know this because he is described as having enacted Christ-like miracles. During a famine, Apollo fed hungry villagers and his monks with the stores of the monastery, until there only remained three baskets of bread. He invoked the Lord, and, no matter how much was taken out of them, the baskets remained full for four months.<sup>14</sup> The painting of Apa Apollo from cell A also singles him out as being especially holy, by showing him with three crosses around his head.

The basis for this assimilation to Christ is clearly stated in the Gospel according to John: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.... He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him."<sup>15</sup> In this passage, the consumption of Christ is the method for assimilating to Christ and attaining eternal life. Another way that

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<sup>11</sup> A. Guillaumont, "Une inscription copte sur la 'Prière de Jésus,'" *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 34 (1968) 312.

<sup>12</sup> *Apophthegmata patrum*, Arsenius 30, Migne, *PG* 65:97C; from Guillaumont 312.

<sup>13</sup> Ward 31.

<sup>14</sup> Budge, 1:348-349.

<sup>15</sup> John 6, 54-56.

Christians in the Late Antique and Early Byzantine periods became Christ was by imitating him. One of the desert fathers said: "The definition of a Christian is the imitation of Christ."<sup>16</sup> The Greek word used in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* is *mimesis*. The western Medieval parallel is the *imitatio Christi*. *Mimesis*, or imitation, was not a uniquely Christian concept, and it was often associated with art in the ancient world. One of the purposes of painting in antiquity was to imitate nature. The Roman historian Pliny tells us that the Greek painter Zeuxis "depicted... grapes with such success that birds flew up to the scene...."<sup>17</sup>

*Mimesis* was also a method for transforming oneself into a different state, for example from sickness to health. In Egyptian healing shrines during the Ptolemaic period, a sick person was rendered whole by becoming the Egyptian god Horus.<sup>18</sup> The process was effected through a conjunction of space, text, image and liquid. The space was a room in a healing sanctuary, an example of which exists next to the Temple of Hathor at Denderah. The petitioner would pour water, which had come from a sacred lake, over a stele or sculpture, which was covered with magical texts and images.<sup>19</sup> The water would absorb the potency of the imagery and words, as it ran over them and collected in a basin. The sick person would drink the water, or immerse himself or herself in it, and recite an invocation. The so-called Metternich stele actually provides direct textual and visual evidence for this process (plate 4).<sup>20</sup> It tells us how the goddess Isis obtained healing for her son Horus, who had been bitten by a scorpion. The narrative flow of the story on this stele is interrupted by instructions to the user. The sick person is

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<sup>16</sup> *Les Apophthegmes des Pères*, trans. Jean-Claude Guy, 122-123.

<sup>17</sup> Pliny, *N.H.* XXXV, 61; J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece 1400-31 B.C.*, Sources and Documents in the History of Art, 2 (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965) 154-155.

<sup>18</sup> John F. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996) 108-110.

<sup>19</sup> Sylvie Cauville, *Le Temple de Dendera*, Guide archéologique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale de Caire, Bibliothèque Générale, XII (Cairo: IFAO, 1995) 90.

<sup>20</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 50.85, dated to 343 B.C.E., and made of dark green greywacke.

told to associate himself or herself with Horus, and to recite the following text: "May the child live and the poison die. As Horus will be cured for his mother Isis, those who suffer will be cured likewise."<sup>21</sup> By imitating the god, the sick person transforms his or her state to one of wholeness. In other words, *mimesis* was used to effect a kind of metamorphosis. Images are part of the process, as one can see in the low-relief carving in the upper zone of this stele, where the young god Horus is shown whole, holding scorpions and other dangerous creatures in his hands, and standing on crocodiles.<sup>22</sup>

It is my belief that important similarities exist between the practices at pagan healing shrines such as the one at Denderah, and the world of Christian monasticism, specifically with the use of imitation, or *mimesis*, to effect transformation. In pagan and Christian Egypt, imitation was actually a method for self-transformation, which was used in conjunction with places, actions, words and substances. While evidence exists to suggest the perpetuation of pagan healing practices in the Christian period, at pilgrimage centers and monasteries in Egypt,<sup>23</sup> my focus here is not on the healing of a sick person, it is on the metamorphosis of the ascetic into progressively higher states of being.

The *Apophthegmata* give the monk a variety of ways to ascend spiritually. One of these is to model himself on holy men who have

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<sup>21</sup> Nunn 108-110.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, texts functioned as images too. My point is that images which were not also words or letters contributed to the magical process. The statue of Djedhor in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, functioned like the Metternich stele, but in a dramatic, sculptural form. It shows a man seated on a rectangular base, holding a Horus *cippus* in front of his knees. The whole statue, with the exception of the figure's face, fingers and toes, and Horus' body, is covered with text. A basin is hollowed out in the base, in front of the *cippus*, to catch the potent water. (This statue is published in E. Jelinkova-Reymond, *Les inscriptions de la statue guériseuse de Djed-her-le-sauveur*, Bibliothèque d'Étude 23 [Cairo: IFAO, 1956].)

<sup>23</sup> Leslie S. B. MacCoull, "Dreams, Visions and Incubation in Coptic Egypt," *Orientalia Louvaniensia Periodica* 22 (1991) 123-128; Frank R. Trombley, "Incubation," *ODB* II:992; Jennifer L. Hevelone-Harper, "S. Colluthus and Coptic Christian Syncretism of Greco-Roman Healing Cults," paper presented at the Twentieth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, November 1994. My thanks to Ms. Hevelone-Harper for giving me a copy of this fascinating paper.

gone before him. This goal is the *raison d'être* of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, as expressed in a prologue to the alphabetical collection: "This book is an account of the virtuous asceticism and admirable way of life and also of the words of the holy and blessed fathers. They are meant to inspire and instruct those who want to imitate their holy lives, so that they may make progress on the way that leads to the kingdom of heaven."<sup>24</sup> These sayings also instruct the monk to imitate—in other words, to become—Christ by mortifying his own flesh, thus paralleling Christ's physical sufferings. He is told to attempt constant prayer,<sup>25</sup> which instruction one particularly zealous monk carried out by keeping one arm upraised in prayer even while he was eating!<sup>26</sup> The *Apophthegmata* also tell the monk to focus exclusively on God. The method for achieving this with respect to thoughts and prayers is learning to look at God.

A standard type of cell found in early Coptic monasteries has a painted niche in its eastern wall, which depicts Christ. A representative example of this is in cell 709 from the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah (plate 2).<sup>27</sup> It shows Christ seated on a throne, surrounded by the four incorporeal beings who take the image of man, ox or calf, eagle, and lion. You can see these winged beings supporting the mandorla which surrounds Christ. These creatures are described as being in a state of constant prayer.<sup>28</sup> In several of these images Christ holds an open codex inscribed with the words: "*Hagios, hagios, hagios.*" Three Old Testament passages have been identified as sources for this image: Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4. They describe an enthroned figure of God, a chariot, cherubim and the four incorporeal beings, repeating "Holy, holy,

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<sup>24</sup> Ward xviii.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac, disciple of Apa Apollo, "had the gift of ceaseless prayer," Ward 94; For Apa Lucius on ceaseless prayer see Ward 102.

<sup>26</sup> F. Nau, "Histoires des solitaires Égyptiens," *ROC*, deuxième série 13 (1908) 60.

<sup>27</sup> This painting is now in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.

<sup>28</sup> John Chrysostom, attr. to, "Encomium on the Four Bodiless Living Creatures," Pierpont Morgan Library M612; trans. Craig S. Wansink, *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, gen. ed. Leo Depuydt (Louvain: Peeters, 1991) 28-29, 38.

holy, is the Lord of Hosts." This commonly painted subject is also linked to the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and therefore monastic practice, facts which have not previously been recognized.

Imagine the monk, seated alone in his cell. In his state of constant prayer, he would be facing east. The *Apophthegmata* tell him that "his gaze must always be on our Lord," and even describe what the inhabitant of cell 709 would have seen before him: "And Ezekiel saw Him on the chariot of the cherubim. And Isaiah...saw Him upon a lofty and glorious throne."<sup>29</sup> This similarity between what the monk is instructed to see, and the iconographic content of these paintings of Christ provides evidence that the paintings were part of the process of learning to see God. We can readily imagine him looking at this image of Christ, as a way of disciplining his thoughts and ascending spiritually. Attempting to pray constantly, he would have as his models the four incorporeal beings supporting the mandorla of Christ.

Other paintings in the cell also relate to the monk's spiritual work. In addition to a series of crosses to the right of the niche (plate 7), which will be discussed later, a painted band encircles the room, consisting of busts of female angels (plate 5). Their inscriptions tell us that they are the personifications of virtues, and are one of the orders of angels within the celestial hierarchy of spiritual beings. In the early Coptic church, they were referred to as the virtues of the holy spirit.<sup>30</sup> They represent a list of virtues, including faith, hope, charity, long-suffering, humility, continence, virginity, chastity and others.<sup>31</sup> The virtues were painted in this cell and several others, and also were included in inscriptions from the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara and the closely related

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<sup>29</sup> Budge, 2:272-273.

<sup>30</sup> R. G. Coquin, "Les Vertus (Aretai) de l'esprit en Égypte," *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974) 447-457.

<sup>31</sup> Coquin 449-457.

Monastery of Apa Apollo and Ama Rachel at Bawit.<sup>32</sup> These personifications clearly played an important role in monastic life.

The virtues in cell 709 have been described as holding stylized globes,<sup>33</sup> but it seems more likely that they are holding eucharistic loaves, which were and are round in Coptic practice. The Coptic eucharistic loaf made today is imprinted with crosses arranged in a grid (plate 6), and its pattern does not resemble the motif on the round objects held by the virtues. The West Syrian loaf, on the other hand, is inscribed with two lines forming a cross, which divide the loaf into quarters.<sup>34</sup> Two circles segment this pattern further since they bisect the cross, and the overall pattern looks very much like that on the discs or loaves held by the virtues. Considering the number of variations of loaf design that exist both among the Eastern churches, and within them, on special *eulogia* loaves, it seems possible that an alternative form of the Coptic loaf existed in the early Byzantine period in Egypt, which more closely resembled the loaves held by the virtues. Since these angelic beings are virtues of the holy spirit, and since the holy spirit transforms the eucharistic bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood, the loaves may function as a general attribute for this group of angels.

In a Christian monastic setting, the consumption of Christ's body and blood in the eucharist was one of the methods for assimilating to Christ, and *mimesis* was another. The process of becoming Christ was a lengthy one, which was undergone in stages, over many years. Becoming an angel was one of these stages, as the name of this way of life, the *bios angelikos*, implies. A saying in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* describes the young man Zacharias undergoing extreme physical mortification, by immersing himself in a lake which was full of nitrate. It ate away at his skin, so that he looked like a leper when he emerged. When his priest realized what he had done, he addressed Zacharias with an acknowledgement of

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<sup>32</sup> The virtues were also painted in Saqqara cell 1725, and Bawit cells 3, 6, 12, 18 and 22. Coquin assembled and translated inscriptions which include the virtues. Coquin 447-449.

<sup>33</sup> Coquin 452.

<sup>34</sup> For an illustration of the West Syrian eucharistic loaf, see: Reginald M. Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist* (London: Mowbray and Co., 1913) 49.

his successful metamorphosis: "Last Sunday the boy Zacharias came and communicated like a man; now he has become like an angel."<sup>35</sup> In another saying, monks are reported to have obtained a special grace, when they saw Apa Silvanus with "his face and body shining like an angel."<sup>36</sup>

Acquiring an angelic virtue was another way of becoming an angel, in the step-by-step process of ascending towards God and assimilating to Christ. An examination of a tale about a monk and the virtue of charity will explicate the use of *mimesis* with respect to the virtues. Apa Lot was in a quandary regarding an old man who would visit him in his cell, and express ideas which Lot found heretical. Lot was unwilling to deny him hospitality, and finally asked Apa Arsenius what to do. Apa Arsenius advised him to continue to offer the heretic food and drink, but also to ask him to cease expressing these ideas. "If he wants to, he will correct himself. If he does not want to change his ways, he will ask to leave this place of his own accord. Thus his departure will not come from you." The heretic did, in fact, choose to leave, and the saying ends with the words: "So... [the heretic] got up and left, accompanied to the door by charity."<sup>37</sup> Apa Lot has become charity itself, another example of *mimesis*, in the process of monastic transformation. The image of charity in cell 709 would have helped the inhabitant to become that virtue.

All of the paintings in cell 709 would have helped the monk in his quest for salvation. In fact, the very program of the paintings was determined by monastic practice. Three subjects of the monk's imitation are before him: Christ, the four incorporeal beings and the angelic virtues. In addition to acting as models for behavior, the virtues (as I have argued) hold the eucharistic bread, reminding the monk of the ritual event in which it becomes Christ's body and is then eaten. Also, the means by which Christ died, in order to be resurrected and triumph over death, is depicted in this cell: namely, the crosses to the right of the niche, on the eastern wall (plate 7). The crosses evoke the reasons for the monk's acts of self-

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<sup>35</sup> Ward 100-101.

<sup>36</sup> Ward 188.

<sup>37</sup> Ward 103.

mortification. He suffers to reenact Christ's sufferings, and to rise above his physical self, sharing in Christ's resurrection.

Unlike paintings in the Greek and Roman traditions, the paintings from Egyptian monasteries were not made to imitate nature. In this system, the object of imitation is Christ, not the natural world, and the primary material for *mimesis* is not plaster and paint, but the body and spirit of the monk himself. The goal of imitation is transformation, a practice developed in pagan healing shrines, but used with a different emphasis in Coptic monastic cells. A place, the representation of the goals of metamorphosis—Apa Apollo, a virtue, or Christ—along with the consumption of an edible substance, and the use of words, both written and spoken, are all tools in a larger act of power. Within the cell in the wilderness, that carefully constructed monastic space, paintings work in various ways. They refer to the act of becoming Christ by eating him—metamorphosis through consumption, witness the eucharistic loaves and the images of the risen Christ, in the apse-like niches. Several of their uses are part of the larger, multi-sensory and dynamic act of effecting metamorphosis through *mimesis*. Models for salvation through imitation are provided in oral and textual form by the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. These paintings are their visual counterpart. Descriptions of the beings on whom these monks modeled themselves, in this process of spiritual advancement, match the subjects of these paintings. Descriptions of their visions are also paralleled, in painted form, in these monasteries.

The monks ascended towards Christ, as if they were angels, by looking at the hierarchy of spiritual beings—sanctified monks, the virtues, the four incorporeal beings, and finally by looking at Christ. They saw divinity first in painted form, and then in actuality, the paintings working with their mental strategies to help them see God. They ascended towards Christ as a result of their actions, for example by becoming charity personified. They ascended towards Christ through self-mortification: fasting, wearing old clothes, denying themselves rest and sleep. They ascended towards Christ by praying ceaselessly. Through a complex



interaction of places, images, words, edible substances, and imitation, the successful monk transformed himself into Christ in advance of his physical death, thus assuring his ultimate goal, salvation.

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(to Bolman, “*Mimesis, Metamorphosis...*”)

Plate 1



Plan of the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara  
(J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara [1908-1909, 1909-1910]*  
[Cairo 1912], Plate 1)

**Plate 2** (to Bolman, "*Mimesis, Metamorphosis...*")



**Christ in Majesty: East Wall, Cell 709, Monastery of Apa Jeremiah  
at Saqqara**

(J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara [1907-1908]* [Cairo 1909],  
Plate VIII)

(to Bolman, “*Mimesis, Metamorphosis...*”)

Plate 3



Row of Monks, including Apa Apollo, North Wall, Cell A, Monastery  
of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara  
(J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara [1906-1907]* [Cairo 1908],  
Plate XLIV)

**Plate 4      (to Bolman, “*Mimesis*, Metamorphosis...”)**



Metternich Stela  
Dynasty 30 (c. 360-342 B.C.E.), Dark green greywacke  
Metropolitan Museum of Art 50.85, Fletcher Fund, 1950  
(Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)



(to Bolman, “*Mimesis, Metamorphosis...*”)

Plate 5



Virtues, Southwest Wall, Cell 709, Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at  
Saqqara

(J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara [1907-1908]* [Cairo 1909],  
Plate X.1)

**Plate 6      (to Bolman, “*Mimesis*, Metamorphosis...”)**



Coptic Liturgical Bread  
Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology 71.2.250a  
(Photograph courtesy Kelsey Museum of Archaeology)

(to Bolman, "*Mimesis, Metamorphosis...*")

Plate 7



Crosses, East Wall, South End, Cell 709, Monastery of Apa  
Jeremiah at Saqqara  
(J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara [1907-1908]* [Cairo 1909],  
Plate X.2)



## Transformations of Ecclesiastical Space: Churches in the Area of Akhmīm\* (Plates 8-19)

This essay indicates some of the developments between the first flowering of Coptic Christianity considered in the three preceding papers, and its present day functioning.<sup>1</sup> I have brought together

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used for this paper:

Clarke Somers Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley: A Contribution towards the Study of the Ancient Churches* (Oxford 1912).

Coquin and Martin René-George Coquin, and Maurice Martin, S.J., *Coptic Encyclopedia* (1991) s.v. Dayr Anbā Bākhūm; Dayr Anbā Bisādah; Dayr al-Malāk Mikhā'il; Dayr Mār Jirjis al-Ḥadīdī; Dayr al-Shuhadā'.

Grossmann 1978 Peter Grossmann, "Zur christlichen Baukunst in Ägypten," *Enchoria: Zeitschrift für Demotistik und Koptologie*. 8 (Sonderband, 1978) 135-46.

Grossmann 1980 Peter Grossmann, "Surveyarbeiten im Raum von Akhmīm," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 27 (1980) 304-6. Grossmann 1982 Peter Grossmann, *Mittelalterliche Langhauskuppelkirchen und verwandte Typen in Oberägypten* (Glückstadt 1982).

Mathews Thomas F. Mathews, "Private' Liturgy in Byzantine Architecture: Toward a Reappraisal," *Art and Architecture in Byzantium and Armenia: Liturgical and Exegetical Approaches* (Aldershot [UK] 1995, reprint from *Cahiers Archéologiques* 30 [1982]) 125-38.

McNally Sheila McNally, *Coptic Encyclopedia* (1991) s.v. Akhmīm: Churches of Akhmīm; Dayr al-'Adhra'; Dayr Anbā Bākhūm; Dayr Anbā Bisādah; Dayr al-Malāk Mikhā'il; Dayr Mār Jirjis al-Ḥadīdī; Dayr Mār Tumās, Dayr al-Shuhadā'.

McNally and Schrunk Sheila McNally and Ivancica Schrunk, *Excavations in Akhmīm, Egypt: Continuity and Change in City Life from Late Antiquity to the Present*, BAR International Series 590 (Oxford 1993).

material collected first by Peter Grossman, then by Sameh Adley, now Brother Samuel of the Syrian Monastery, and to a lesser extent by myself. My purpose is to draw attention to some issues raised by the development of Coptic religious spaces. To illustrate those issues I will focus on the development as we can trace it today in the area of Akhmīm.<sup>2</sup>

The paper emphasizes breadth rather than depth: its evidence consists of nine churches that have each been in use for a total of about fifteen centuries. The buildings all survive in reasonable condition. Some are in regular use, others are visited only on special occasions, but all remain functioning parts of local community life. My analysis is superficial, both literally and figuratively—literally, because we have not investigated what modern plaster and paint may conceal, still less conducted any excavation at these sites. As presented here, the earliest phase of each site is, therefore, the earliest phase still discernible in a standing structure. Certainly in one case, and probably in most others, earlier structures must lie beneath the ground.

This paper is also superficial in its consideration of the way the architectural developments both reflected and shaped liturgical and other activities. There has been little study of the ways the Coptic Church and community developed during most of the centuries discussed here. The buildings tell us clearly that the community was both vibrant and changing, and that it experienced several spurts of inventive construction. We cannot yet say clearly how or

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Meinardus    Otto Meinardus, *Christian Egypt, Ancient and Modern*, Second revised edition (Cairo 1977).

Samuel al-Syriany    Samuel al-Syriany, *Guide to Ancient Coptic Churches and Monasteries in Upper Egypt* [(Egypt) 1990].

Walters    C. C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* (Warminster 1974).

<sup>2</sup> My work on these buildings, and part of Brother Samuel's, was carried out during an archaeological project in Akhmīm funded by the National Endowment of the Humanities and the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, both of which I heartily thank. As part of the same project, Peter Donaldson made an invaluable contribution in checking plans and in compiling photographic documentation of the buildings and their contents. The plans published here are based on the elegant drawings finished by Samuel al-Syriany in 1982, but were redrawn by Inga Oelschlager in AutoCad to standardize some of the conventions.

why these spurts occurred. They reflect relationships with other Christian communities, and with the larger Egyptian community, that need further study. The new or reshaped spaces must have had effects on liturgical and non-liturgical activity that can be only suggested here.

The Late Antique origins of church building in Egypt are fairly clear, the later phases much less so, and the final spurt remains for now the most intriguing because the most unclear.

In Late Antiquity, Akhmīm was the important city of Panopolis. Pachomius (c. 290-346) is known to have established three monasteries in or near the city,<sup>3</sup> but the earliest churches that survive in this vicinity today are Dayr al Abyaḍ and Dayr al-Aḥmar: the great church built by Shenute at the White Monastery near Sohag and the church of the Red Monastery to the north of it. Both lie across the river from Akhmīm.<sup>4</sup> They come into this paper only as they influenced what went on in humbler churches on the east bank of the Nile.

The churches I am discussing are, from north to south (see Plate 8):

- (1) Dayr Anbā Tumās (or Dayr Mār Tumās, St. Thomas),<sup>5</sup>
- (2) Dayr Anbā Bākhūm (St. Pachomius),<sup>6</sup>
- (3) Dayr al-Malāk Mikhāʿīl (St. Michael, also known as Dayr al-Bahry, the northern monastery),<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Little effort has been made to establish their locations: René-Georges Coquin, *Coptic Encyclopedia* (1991) sv. Akhmīm: Monasteries; McNally and Schrunck, 6.

<sup>4</sup> The church of the White Monastery was built when Shenute was abbot, between about 385 and 449. The Red Monastery is presumed to be slightly later: Grossmann 1978, 137-39 and passim; Meinardus, 293-94; Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Les couvents près de Sohâg* (Milan, 1925); Samuel al-Syriany, 80-82.

<sup>5</sup> Grossmann 1978, 142; McNally; Samuel al-Syriany, 78-79.

<sup>6</sup> Coquin and Martin; Grossmann 1980, 304-5; McNally; Meinardus, 406-7; Samuel al-Syriany, 77-78.

<sup>7</sup> Coquin and Martin; McNally; Meinardus, 407-8; Samuel al-Syriany, 78-79.

- (4) Dayr al-Shuhadā' (the Monastery of the Martyrs, also known as Dayr al-Waṣṭanī, the middle monastery),<sup>8</sup>
- (5) Dayr al-ʿAdhra' (The Monastery of the Virgin, also known as Dayr al-Qbli, the southern monastery),<sup>9</sup>
- (6) Abū Sayfayn (St. Mercurius),<sup>10</sup>
- (7) Sitt Dimyānah, <sup>11</sup>
- (8) Dayr Mārī Jirjis (St. George, also known as Dayr al-Ḥadīdī),<sup>12</sup>
- (9) Dayr Anbā Bisādah (St. Bisada).<sup>13</sup>

Some remains can still be seen of another monastery, the Monastery of the Seven Mountains (Dermadoud) in the Wadi Bir al-ʿAin. Most of its buildings have disappeared. The bir itself remains a much visited spot, but not the monastic site.<sup>14</sup>

The spatial distribution indicated on the map (Plate 8) is limited to still-functioning buildings, but it is no accident that the only really remote one, the Monastery of the Seven Mountains, should have passed completely not only out of use but out of popular awareness. Most of the others are in, or on the edges of, cities and villages. Several of them are thought to have once belonged to monastic communities, but now function as village churches. Two are city churches in Akhmīm. Only three today stand in the desert, isolated from ordinary settlements. Those three lie within view of each other and are sometimes called the north,

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<sup>8</sup> Coquin and Martin; Grossmann 1982, 202-3; McNally; Meinardus, 408-9; Samuel al-Syriany, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Coquin and Martin; Clarke, 144-45, Pl. 42, 2; McNally; Meinardus, 409-10; Samuel al-Syriany, 73.

<sup>10</sup> Coquin and Martin; McNally; Samuel al-Syriany, 74-75.

<sup>11</sup> McNally; Samuel al-Syriany, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Clarke, 142-44, pl. 42; McNally; Meinardus, 410-11; Samuel al-Syriany, 69-70.

<sup>13</sup> Grossmann 1980, 305-6; McNally; H. Munier, "Les monuments coptes d'après les explorations du Père Michel Jullien," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 6 (1940) 155-56; Meinardus, 411-12; Samuel al-Syriany, 68-69.

<sup>14</sup> Bibliography in McNally and Schrunck, 6.

middle, and south monasteries, and other times by the names of the saints to whom they are dedicated, St. Michael, the Martyrs of Akhmim, and the Virgin. They are less than an hour's walk from local villages.

The siting of all these still-functioning buildings bears witness to the essential relationship between monastic and non-monastic communities.<sup>15</sup> In Egypt, desert begins where irrigation ceases. To monks, the desert offers the isolation of spiritual distance, of freedom from preexisting organization, not necessarily an isolation defined by physical distance from roads or settlements. Pachomian foundations were particularly likely to lie close to towns and villages.<sup>16</sup> Despite the reluctance so strikingly embodied in St. Antony the Great, most Coptic monastic communities probably saw intercourse with the outside world, in particular the reception of guests, as inherent to their life. I will mention one modern instance of that intercourse at the end of this paper. (The final paper given at the Ann Arbor conference provided more analysis of this subject.)

The close relationship between monastic and non-monastic can be seen again when one looks at the plans of these nine buildings, which provide the main information for this paper, and their interior appointments, to which I will give less attention here. I cannot point to any feature that is specifically "monastic" in the churches themselves, and little in the compounds around them. It is significant that all of these buildings, city church and desert monastery alike, do have compounds around them, and that most of those compounds include living quarters (for priests or caretakers with their families). The enclosure walls probably began with

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<sup>15</sup> The Monastery of the Seven Mountains probably originally lay near a route to the Red Sea passable only by foot travelers, and now out of use (Klaus P. Kuhlmann, *Materialien zur Archäologie und Geschichte des Raumes von Akhmim* [Mainz 1983]). There were hermits there as late as 1714, see note 13.

<sup>16</sup> Walters cites sources for lay presence at the White Monastery, which he calls "semi-parochial" (36-37).

Goehring notes the frequent "proximity of the ascetic community to a town or village," opposing it to the dominance of the desert as an ideal in literature. He may overestimate the difference between the two: James E. Goehring, "The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993) 290 and passim.

monasteries, where Pachomius' rule calls for them (Walters, 12-13), but have proved widely useful. What was said above about the siting of monasteries applies also to the construction of building complexes. We are not looking at exclusive polarities. Enclosure, like isolation, exists to varying degrees to reflect the simultaneous divisions and connections in communities.

The chart (Plate 9) divides these churches according to three basic types of Egyptian church architecture: long churches, short or centralized churches, and broad churches.<sup>17</sup>

The types fall roughly into three chronological phases; there is, however, little direct evidence for dating the three phases in Egypt generally, and almost none for the dates of the buildings discussed here. Absolute chronology therefore will play little part in my analysis.<sup>18</sup> Enough evidence exists to show that churches with a

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<sup>17</sup> My criteria for these categories basically agree with Walters'. He divides "long" plans (which he says are never truly basilican) from "short" ones on the basis of relative proportions (Walters, 27-28). He does not cover the period in which broad churches flourished, but they too can be defined by proportions. Peter Grossmann provided a more sophisticated summary of the historical development in 1978, and developed some aspects of it in 1982. He stresses structural relationships between plans and elevations as critical to understanding the evolution of types. His characterizations of "centralized" do not simply coincide with "short." Here I am concerned with major changes that affect people's use of the structures. Plans indicate some of the most important, although not the only, constraints on activity, and therefore provide most of my evidence, although I agree with Grossmann's argument that we will not understand the process of development by looking at plans alone.

<sup>18</sup> One of these churches, Sitt Dimyānah, bears a painted date at the end of the sixteenth century. For all the others, dates have been proposed on the basis of tradition; of dated sources that mention the site but not necessarily this building; or of type. Although this evidence is never reliable, it comes together to form a probable picture: intermittent construction into Fatimid times, a gap during the Mamluke period, and renewed activity in the Ottoman period, continuing at a slower pace up to the present. This picture agrees reasonably well with what is known about external factors that would affect construction: i.e., the degree of local Islamization, the attitude of authorities, and the vitality of the economy.

Recent students of Islamization stress that their results are preliminary and much remains to be done. One scholar, Lev, thinks there was a "wave of Islamization" in the tenth century leaving a strong Christian population, then no major change until a final Islamization under the Mamlukes (Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* [Leiden 1990] 182 and *passim*). Bulliet thinks that a

typologically earlier plan could be built long after a later type of plan had been introduced.

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Christian majority may have remained until about 900, but probably disappeared under the Fatimids. He too, however, sees the Mamluke period as producing the first "powerful and dynamic social and religious elite within the local Muslim community," an elite that declined precipitously after the Ottoman takeover in 1516 (Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* [Cambridge, Mass. 1979] 74-79, 102, 135, 138). Such a local elite might well inhibit Christian church building.

Schick notes that immediately after the Arab Conquest no restriction seems to have been placed on church building or repair (Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* [Princeton 1995] 161-63). Lev and May discuss development of constraints, implemented only intermittently through the Fatimid period (Lev *op. cit.* 182-94; Burkhard May, "Der Religionspolitik der Ägyptischen Fātimiden: 969-1171," Ph.D. diss., University of Hamburg, 1975).

Egypt probably benefited economically by the Arab conquest (I hope to discuss this issue at greater length elsewhere). Historical sources indicate that Akhmīm shared in that prosperity, that it retained a large Christian community until at least the thirteenth century, but had experienced a drastic decline in its whole urban life by the Sixteenth (McNally and Schrunk, 10-11). We know many attested monasteries and churches have disappeared. In the thirteenth century Abū Salīḥ counted seventy churches in the city or its surroundings, so we may suppose that disappearance may have occurred primarily in the Mamluke period, rather than earlier (see Stefan Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit: Eine Sammlung christlicher Stätten in Ägypten in arabischer Zeit* [Wiesbaden 1984] Part 1, vol 1, 89; on problems that Christians in Egypt experienced in the fourteenth century, Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East* [Jefferson NC 1991] 119).

Clearly the Ottoman period then saw some economic revival, and Coptic religious renewal in Akhmīm. Both these developments need more attention. Avigor Levy alludes to "the revitalization and reorganization of the economies of Egypt (and other areas) after the Ottoman conquests." Reviewing the evidence for Ottoman pragmatism in dealing with minorities, he argues that "in its attitude toward its non-Muslim subjects, the Ottoman Empire was one of the most tolerant Muslim states ever to exist" ("Introduction," *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton 1994) 27, 16 and *passim*. See also Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "The Political Situation of the Copts, 1798-1923," *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* [Princeton 1982] esp. 186-87 on the end of the Ottoman period).

*Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Toronto 1990) provides few relevant data, but valuable models for future inquiry.

The "long" churches of course belong to the familiar basilican type dominant in the Early Christian period, designed to accommodate large congregations and major liturgical processions.<sup>19</sup> Only one long church is now clearly attested in the region of Akhmīm.

Four churches with short plans survive. Although not unknown earlier, centralized plans became popular in Egypt after the Arab conquest, particularly in the Fatimid period, testifying to the continued vitality of the Coptic community and its continued connection with the Byzantine Christian world to the north, in particular to Middle Byzantine architecture.

New roofing and furnishing, domes and sanctuary screens, became widespread at roughly the same time. Centralized plans, domes, and sanctuary screens go well together (see discussion of St. Pachomius below), but it is not usually possible to determine the sequence of their appearance in any given building.<sup>20</sup>

The third group, the broad churches, first developed in the Mamluke period, but most or all of those near Akhmīm are Ottoman. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a very active time for church building in this area: three of the four older churches were probably remodeled then, and five new churches were built. The breadth of plan shows influence from mosque architecture but provides an interesting illustration of the way builders can take over major features to create a totally different effect.

A final development illustrated at the bottom right of the chart is the enlarging of churches by creating a second, separate church attached to the first. That is a strictly urban development, occurring in the city of Akhmīm. It does not, however, indicate that creativity has shifted completely from the monasteries to the cities.

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<sup>19</sup> Mathews, 125-26.

<sup>20</sup> Grossmann traces the development of domed construction, noting its relationship to Islamic architecture in Egypt, but even more to Byzantine architecture (1982, 65). The dated higabs he mentions are late, sixteenth and nineteenth century (1982, 54, 180). Mathews argues that the similar development in Byzantine buildings began in the eleventh century (126), the period of centralization in plans.



The final use of space that I will mention here is the current revitalization of two of the three desert monasteries.

The chart gives the impression that the number of churches has increased dramatically, but of course that is because we are looking only at standing structures. Certainly earlier churches existed in Akhmīm (see note 18) and at some or most of the other sites. Nonetheless, the amount of new construction in the last four centuries commands respect.

The oldest surviving church is Dayr Anbā Bākhūm (Plate 10). It lies in the northern part of a village, al-Sawām'a Sharq, about eight kilometers north of Akhmīm, and is dedicated to a local St. Pachomius and his sister Dalousha, who were martyred nearby.<sup>21</sup> In its original form, Dayr Anbā Bākhūm was a poor relation to the church of the White Monastery. The White Monastery church is about twice as large and much more elaborate. The most obvious link between the two buildings lies in their plans, both ending in three-lobed sanctuaries.<sup>22</sup>

The interior decoration of Anbā Bākhūm preserves further evidence of borrowing. The south lobe of the original sanctuary has a central niche with an oddly shaped frame. This is a cruder version of the double-angled ("zweimal geknickten") gables that appear in the trefoil sanctuaries in the apses of the White and Red Monasteries. Grossmann therefore considers this church to have been built not long after those two, possibly in the seventh century (1980, 304–6).<sup>23</sup>

The pier at the left or north edge of the eastern lobe preserves another remnant of the original stone decoration of this building. The White Monastery was a stone building, but the Akhmīm churches, like the Red Monastery, are all built of brick. Stone decorative elements are usually survivals from the Early Christian

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<sup>21</sup> Since they are martyrs, this Pachomius is clearly not, as I stated in my article in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*, the founder of cenobitic monasticism.

<sup>22</sup> Three-lobed or triconch sanctuaries appear in Upper Egypt at the White and Red Monasteries and Dendera, and in modified form in various other places: Grossmann 1978: 138; 1982: 74, 78; Walters, 26, 32–33.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel al-Syriani seems to date this stage of the church to the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries (77), but he probably means the later rebuilding.

period, in place or reused. This original pier has been embedded in a much thicker support to bear a dome over the central space. The dome was probably first constructed during the second phase, when the building became a centralized church. That also may be the time at which a sanctuary screen was inserted in front of the eastern lobe. The present sanctuary screen supports a painting of Pachomius and Dalousha.

Whatever the reason was for shortening the church, the new structure created a closer relationship among the members of the congregation, and between them and celebrants of the liturgy. We cannot be sure that a sanctuary screen and a central dome were introduced at the same time that the church was shortened, but the three innovations work together to establish a new dynamic in the interior. The sanctuary screen with its central door emphasizes degrees of sacredness, and connection between them. When a dominant dome rises in front of that central door, the major stress inside the building moves from the sanctuary to the point where the sanctuary and the place of the laity intersect.

The centralized plan of this second phase was created by truncation: The long basilican nave was torn down, and so the side lobes of the original sanctuary became the body of the church, leaving a single curved sanctuary. Several remnants of the original nave and columns remain visible today. Excavation in the courtyard would probably find more. On the other side of the river both the White and Red Monasteries were similarly truncated to become trefoil shaped churches. The visitor today can easily discern the outlines of the one-time nave and aisles with their discarded columns. The church of St. Pachomius, like the Red and White Monasteries, now has a courtyard where once it had a nave.

Besides creating a new relationship inside the church proper, this truncation also creates a grand courtyard outside. It is easy to suppose that the development took place because smaller congregations could not maintain the large original spaces, and that is probably partly true, but small churches also became popular in parts of the Byzantine world where the total number of Christians was not necessarily declining. Another contributing factor lies in a changing relationship between liturgical and non-liturgical, or even

between different types of liturgical, activities.<sup>24</sup> These outdoor areas are used today for gatherings of the laity and probably always have been.

The centralized phase of these originally basilican buildings therefore creates, first, a complex interior space, pressing the congregation close together and close to the sanctuary screen; and, second, on the exterior, a freer field for less intense or disciplined interaction. The importance of the second, exterior space can be seen by its occurrence adjacent to churches that have not gone through these stages. Not only does every one of these nine churches, whenever it was first built, have a walled enclosure with subsidiary buildings, but most have well-defined non-consecrated spaces outside their main doors.

The present city church of Abū Sayfayn, for instance, has a navelike outdoor space leading up to its doorway (Plate 11). In the newly refurbished desert monastery of the Virgin (see below), the court outside the main church door is an important locus of festive activity. To consider the functional implications of spatial changes we need to look at the whole complex.

The second church with a centralized trilobate plan is Dayr Anbā Bisādah (Plate 12), about eighteen kilometers south of Akhmīm, in the village of al-Aḥaywah Sharq, which lies to the west of the road to Naj‘ Ḥammādi. This church has a number of unusual features that make its history hard to determine without further study. Removal of the present plaster would be necessary to determine the building phases. It also may be a truncated basilica or may simply have copied St. Pachomius in that church's truncated phase.

The oldest parts seem to be an eastern lobe, a small part of a southern lobe, and a room between them that contains the tomb of

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<sup>24</sup> Mango sees the change to smaller churches in the Byzantine world as sometimes reflecting straitened means or reduced populations (Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* [New York 1976] 249, cf. Grossmann 1982: 157-58). Only Mathews explores the liturgical implications, providing a model for future work on the Egyptian developments. In the Coptic world, the liturgical changes would have taken different form. In both places, however, the reordering of relationships between worshippers, celebrants, and sacred objects, whether it is a cause or an effect of the new spaces, would be drastic.

the martyred bishop Bisādah. The western part of the church has an irregular shape. More investigation would be necessary to determine whether it incorporates remnants of a nave (indicated on the plan by the dotted line). Indications of a relatively early date for some of the construction include a reused stone cross over the entrance and a stone doorway into the chamber with the saint's grave.<sup>25</sup>

The third church in this trilobate group is the most modest, Dayr Anbā Tumās (Plate 13). It stands near the cliffs of the Arabian plateau, on the outskirts of the village of Sayyid al-Husary about thirteen kilometers north of Akhmīm. It is only a short distance north of the church of Dayr Anbā Bākhūm, which seems obviously to have influenced its builders, although their activities may have occurred at a considerably later date.<sup>26</sup>

A room beside the sanctuary contains a grave, probably that of Thomas, the local saint to whom the church is dedicated. This arrangement resembles that at Dayr Anbā Bisādah except that the grave lies on the opposite side of the sanctuary.

The fourth centralized church, Dayr al-Shuhadā', the Monastery of the Martyrs, differs from the first three (Plate 14). All four are three units deep and three wide, but the three discussed so far have a single sanctuary with side rooms, two of them containing graves. Dayr al-Shuhadā' had three almost equal sanctuaries. These multiple sanctuaries may be connected to its monastic function: it may be the earliest of the three "desert monasteries." It incorporates several pieces of reused stone, but shows no sign of an

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<sup>25</sup> Carving survives on its lintel and southern jamb. Samuel al-Syriany suggests a date in the seventh to eighth centuries for this church (68); Grossmann more or less agrees, dating it later than Dayr Anbā Bākhūm, and after the Roman period, because of its poor construction (Grossmann 1980). The construction is perhaps more likely to reflect the smaller, poorer place where it was built, since churches in old Cairo and elsewhere securely dated to the first centuries after the Conquest do not show a decline. Meinardus mentions a tradition that it was built in the thirteenth century (Meinardus, 412), but that may be memory of some stage of remodeling.

<sup>26</sup> In an unpublished report written in 1981, Samuel al-Syriany noted that, except for the local trait of the curved side bays, the church of St. Thomas resembles the short churches in the Natrun Valley. Grossmann suggests a sixteenth century date (1980, 304).

earlier building phase even though it is on the side of a large early Coptic cemetery. That fact, along with other evidence, strongly suggests that it is on the site of one of Pachomius' foundations. If that is so, then the original monastery would appear to have fallen into complete decay, so that no part could be incorporated in this structure.

All around this church today the visitor sees the jumbled earth, full of pottery, cloth, and broken up skeletons, of the early Coptic graves that were extensively excavated (or pillaged, but legally) in the nineteenth century (McNally and Schrunck, 2, 9). At no great distance to the north and south, two more monasteries can be seen: the Monastery of the Virgin on one side and of St. Michael on the other. The closeness of the three structures and the multiplication of new monastic foundations, probably all within a couple of centuries, are striking.<sup>27</sup>

The churches to the north and south may be later than the one in the middle because they were built with broad plans (Plates 15 and 16).<sup>28</sup> During the period of broad church building, five new churches were built: these two, Abū Sayfayn, Sitt Dimyānah, and Dayr Mārī Jirjis (Plates 17-19). Breadth became generally desirable, so three of the earlier churches, Dayr Anbā Bākhūm, Dayr Anbā Bisādah, and Dayr al-Shuhadā', acquired additional sanctuaries. Only St. Thomas, in the most marginal position

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<sup>27</sup> When I presented this paper in Ann Arbor, it was suggested to me that all three of these monasteries may lie on the site of the original Pachomian foundation, which might have covered a large area. The relationship between original cemetery and monastic buildings would be interesting to discover. No Pachomian foundation has so far been excavated, except for part of the church at Pbaw.

<sup>28</sup> There are two other indications that Dayr al-Shuhadā' may be earlier: it lacks the painted brick work of the others (see below), and, unlike them but like Dayr Anbā Bākhūm and Dayr Anbā Bisādah, it has a higab with two doors on either side of a window. The monastery of St. Michael was functioning in the fifteenth century (see note 33), but not necessarily with its present church: The similarities between its church and the other broad ones argue against great difference in date.

geographically, remained small. Subsidiary rooms were erected in front, but the church proper did not change.<sup>29</sup>

The newly built broad churches have features in common that the remodeled ones do not share. Two of these are desert monasteries, two are city churches in Akhmīm, and the third is in a small village south of Akhmīm. Apparently these varied positions did not cause significant differences in the functions of the interiors. Typologically all are strikingly repetitive.

Each is five units wide and three deep. Large columns separate the two broad areas for the congregation. At the east, these churches all had three sanctuaries between two side rooms. (In the two city churches, the original configuration at the east has been cut by remodeling.) Samuel al-Syriany recognized that these buildings belong to a local subtype, the clearest mark of which is a sanctuary shape with straight walls leading to the curve at the rear.<sup>30</sup> Four of the buildings have another local feature, a corridor or corridors behind the sanctuaries.

Space does not permit a discussion of the specific buildings of this phase, so I will indicate some of their general characteristics. This is the only stage of development that we can now see clearly, and it has been the least studied or appreciated. The breadth, and use of columns, obviously owe something to mosque architecture, but the effect is radically different. The placement of the different furnishings, most notably of the sanctuary barriers, creates a fundamentally non-mosquelike character for these spaces.

Mosques are open and unfocused. In the broad churches, on the other hand, boundaries between degrees of sacredness become even more important than they had been before. Greater width expands the role of sanctuary screens with all the attendant curtains, pictures, and other fixtures. The congregation continues to press close to the holy images and the holy spaces concealed behind

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<sup>29</sup> The only alteration reflecting later stylistic developments is the painting of the interior bricks red and black, as in later constructions in and around Akhmīm (see below), although the bricks had been laid differently here.

<sup>30</sup> He described these in an unpublished report in 1981, and subsequently incorporated some of his observations in his book, where he mentions other churches of this type: 66-67, 75-76.

them.<sup>31</sup> The new plans increase the usable space in the sanctuary area, the visual impact of that area on the rest of the interior, and the space for the congregation. More information about changes in population and in liturgical practice might tell us which of these effects, or what combination of them, made the broad plan so universally needed. A possible factor may have been desire to provide for more separation within the congregation. In several of the churches, light wooden barriers have been placed between the columns. One area is for the men and the other for the women. This division may be a relatively recent custom that required a larger total area.<sup>32</sup>

The five new churches create effective contrasts of colors and textures in their interiors. Expanses of whitewash, often on mud brick, set off areas of baked and painted brick. Columns, arches, and some domes are built from fired bricks laid in geometric patterns. The patterns are strengthened by red and black paint with white dividing lines. The paint often creates crosses and for congregations today its color recalls the blood of the martyrs.<sup>33</sup>

Slight centralizing, axial tendencies persist. The central sanctuary screen and doorway are usually more elaborate than the

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<sup>31</sup> A fuller analysis would consider the role of other furnishings in establishing barriers and transitions. Samuel al-Syriany mentions one telling example of a mediating function: at St. Pachomius "there is also a lectern rotating about an axis used for the Coptic reader facing the sanctuary, and the Arabic reader facing the people" (77).

<sup>32</sup> Wilfong points out that there is scant evidence for such segregation among the general population in the early Coptic Church, and cites Fred Donner's view that it may be a recent development "due to the influence of Muslim practice" (Terry Wilfong, "The Woman of Jeme': Women's Roles in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt," Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1994, 44). The segregation can occur without built barriers and can involve a longitudinal or lateral division.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel al-Syriany shows how powerfully concrete this allusion can be: "It is said that these bricks (he is discussing the church of the Virgin) should remind visitors of the martyrs of Akhmim, whose blood stained the walls of the church at Christmas time during the reign of Diocletian" (73). Clarke considers the paint "the direct outcome of dealing frankly with the material" (145, cf. fig. 31, illustrating Dayr al-'Adhra' before its recent renovation), but often the painted patterns are superimposed over the structural ones, i.e., the white lines do not always run along the joints between the bricks.

others, and the dome in front of them is the highest in the church, often on decorative brick squinches where other domes are on plain pendentives. At several churches, such as Abū Sayfayn, Anbā Bākhūm, and St. Thomas, wooden domes decorated with vigorously painted figures rise above the central altars so that the congregation can see them over the sanctuary screen.

The last major construction that has occurred created double churches in the city of Akhmīm, apparently in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. The more recent church at Abū Sayfayn has gone back deliberately to the earliest basilican shape. One of each pair of churches is now derelict: at Sitt Dimyānah, only the older one remains in use, and at Abū Sayfayn, only the more recent.

The most recent major changes in these spaces have revived the use of the desert monasteries, primarily by the lay community. Use of monastic space in contemporary Coptic life, the subject of the last paper at the Ann Arbor conference, lies outside the scope of the present collection. I do not want to omit it completely here, particularly since it touches on a use of space not considered so far: the location of cemeteries.

Of the three desert churches, the Monastery of St. Michael is now visited only on his feast day. The Monastery of the Virgin has been renovated, in the 1970s and more extensively in the 1990s, and is now the home of several monks. Its courtyards have shining floors, plants, and clear water. Its interior is newly painted. It provides a place of refreshment, light, and peace; of liturgical and non-liturgical festivity for the local Copts.<sup>34</sup>

Even more recently, just at the end of the 1980s, the Monastery of the Martyrs, without being restored at all, has regained one function its Pachomian predecessor had, of a backdrop for burial. Copts are again burying their dead close to the monastery and on the fringes of the earliest Christian cemetery. An embroidery done by one of the young women at a local weaving school shows the

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<sup>34</sup> The maintenance of monasteries primarily to provide safety for the laity in an unsafe world is not new: of St. Michael's Samuel al-Syriani says: "Al-Maqrizi (fifteenth century), mentioned that during his lifetime only one monk inhabited the monastery (and that many buildings in it were simply resthouses for visitors and stables for their donkeys and horses)" (71).



funeral of a recent bishop in front of clustered domes surmounted by crosses. The composition reminds us of the impact these constructions have always had on exterior as well as interior space. It shows the importance of the building as backdrop.

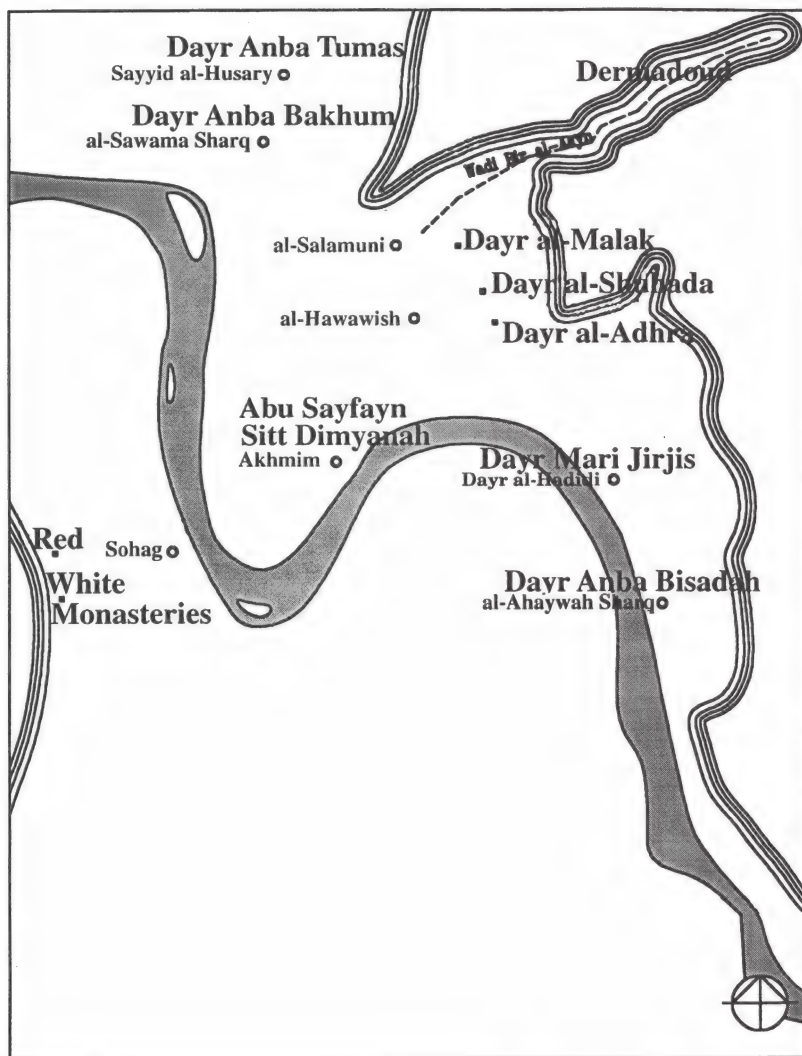
These buildings help to define the Coptic community. Their spaces reflect and shape overlapping and changing relationships within that community and between it and others. They create boundaries and connections that are for the contemporary worshipers, but are not limited to them. At the embroidered funeral, angels perch on the domes. For their users, the major and unchanging function of all these buildings is to connect the Seen with the Unseen.

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**Plate 8**

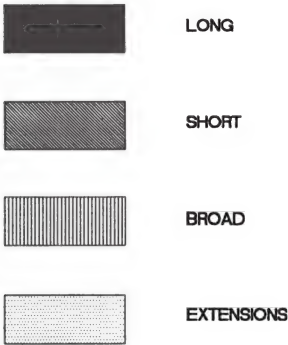
(to McNally, "Transformations...")



The Area of Akhmim

LONG CHURCHES: Seventh Century?								
Dayr Anba Bakhum	Bisadah ?							
SHORT CHURCHES: Little evidence for date: Ninth to Eleventh? one later?								
Dayr Anba Bakhum	Dayr Anba Bisadah	Dayr Anba Tumas		Dayr al-Shuhada				
BROAD CHURCHES: Possibly one Fifteenth, mainly Sixteenth and Seventeenth								
Dayr Anba Bakhum	Dayr Anba Bisadah		Dayr al-Malak	Dayr al-Shuhada	Dayr al-Adhra	Dayr Mari Jirjis	Abu Sayfayn	Sitt Dim-yanah
DOUBLE CHURCHES: Nineteenth to Twentieth								
							Abu Sayfayn	Sitt Dim-yanah

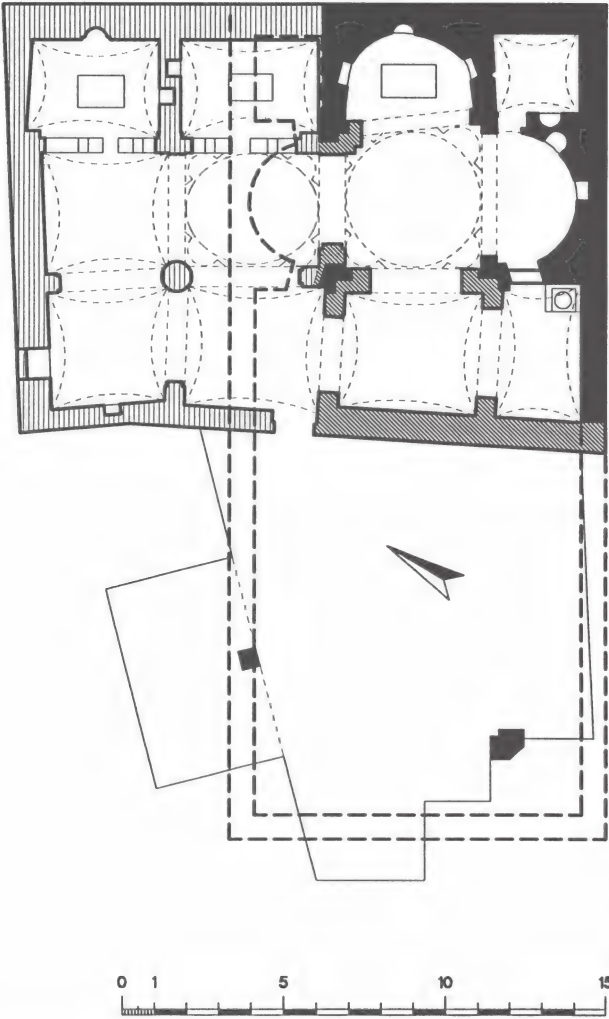
Chart of Church Types



Key to plans on Plates 10-19

**Plate 10**

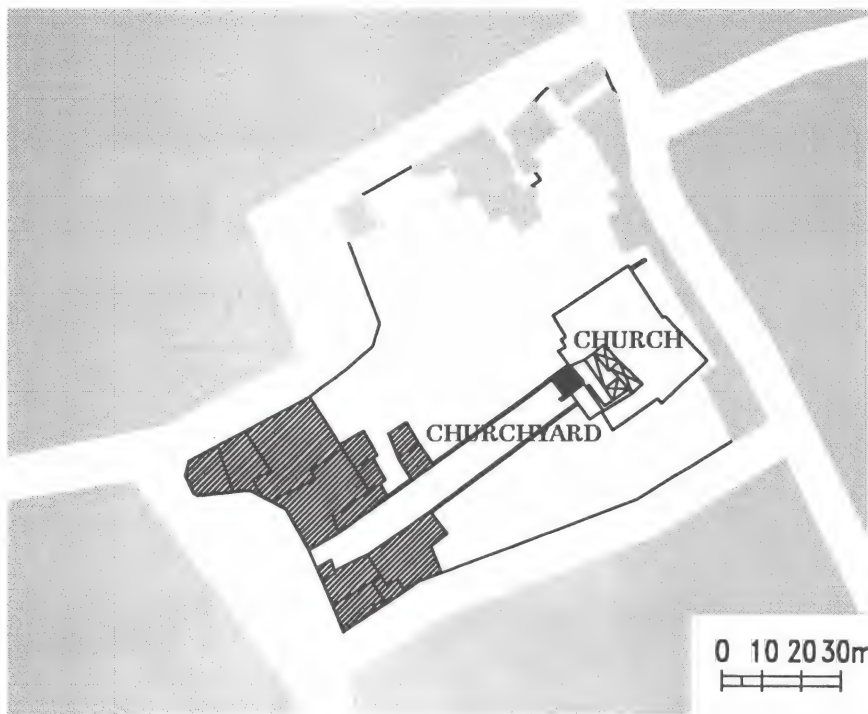
**(to McNally, “Transformations...”)**



**Dayr Anbā Bākhūm (St. Pachomius)**

(to McNally, "Transformations...")

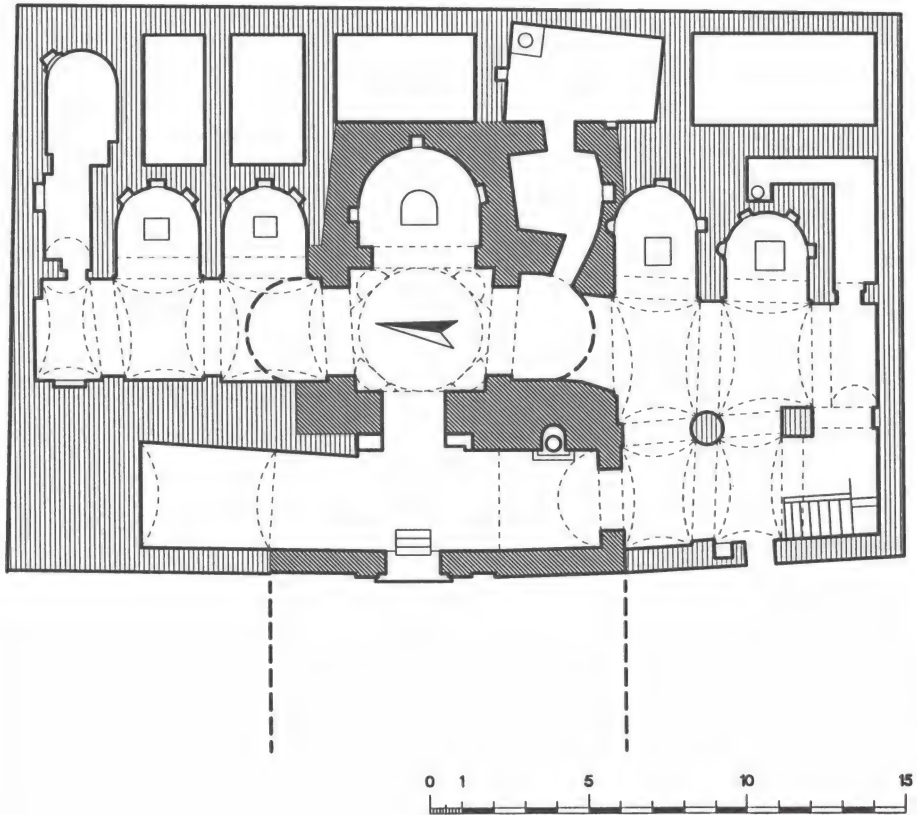
Plate 11



Abū Sayfayn with Surrounding Area

**Plate 12**

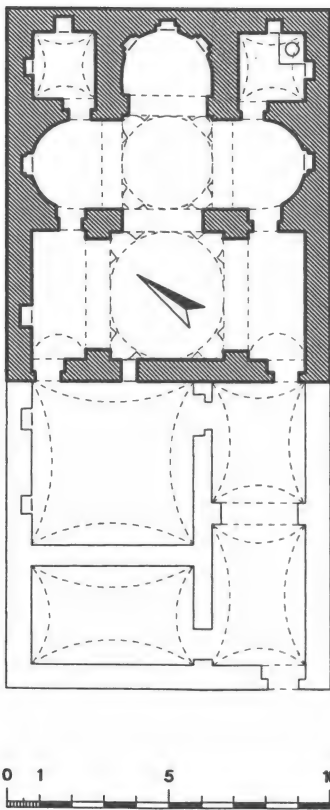
(to McNally, "Transformations...")



Dayr Anbā Bisādah (St. Bisada)

(to McNally, “Transformations...”)

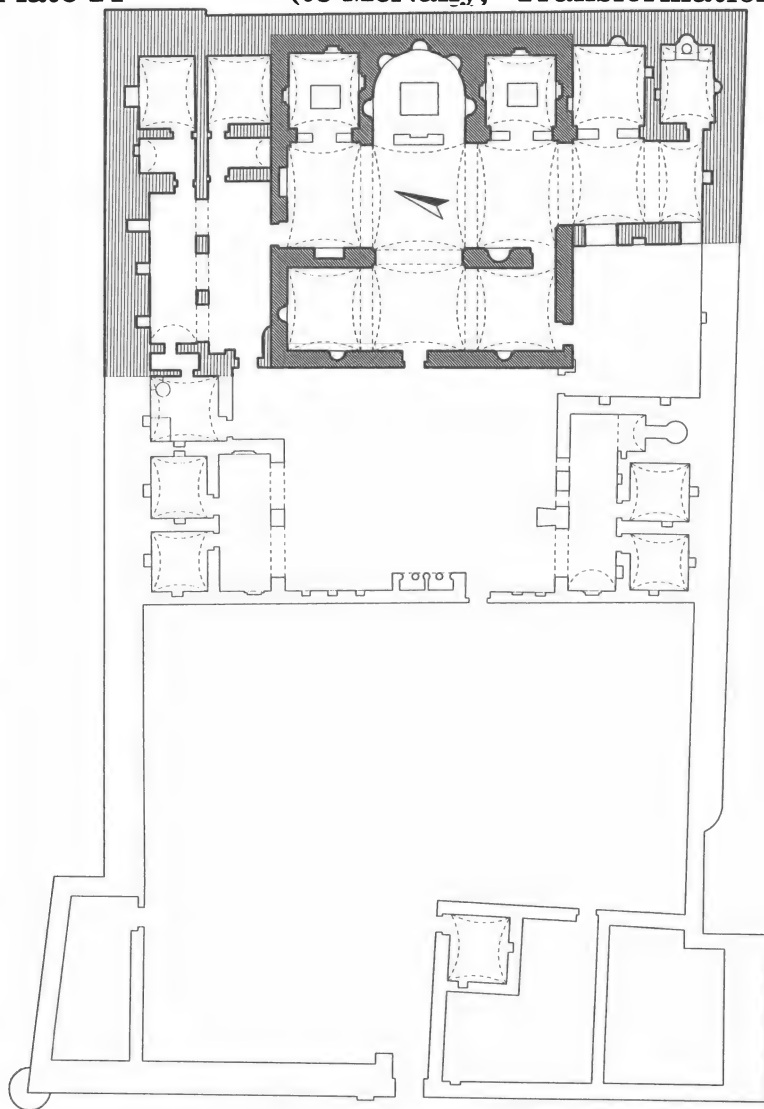
Plate 13



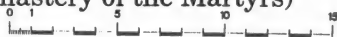
Dayr Anbā Tumās (or Dayr Mār Tumās, St. Thomas)

**Plate 14**

**(to McNally, “Transformations...”)**



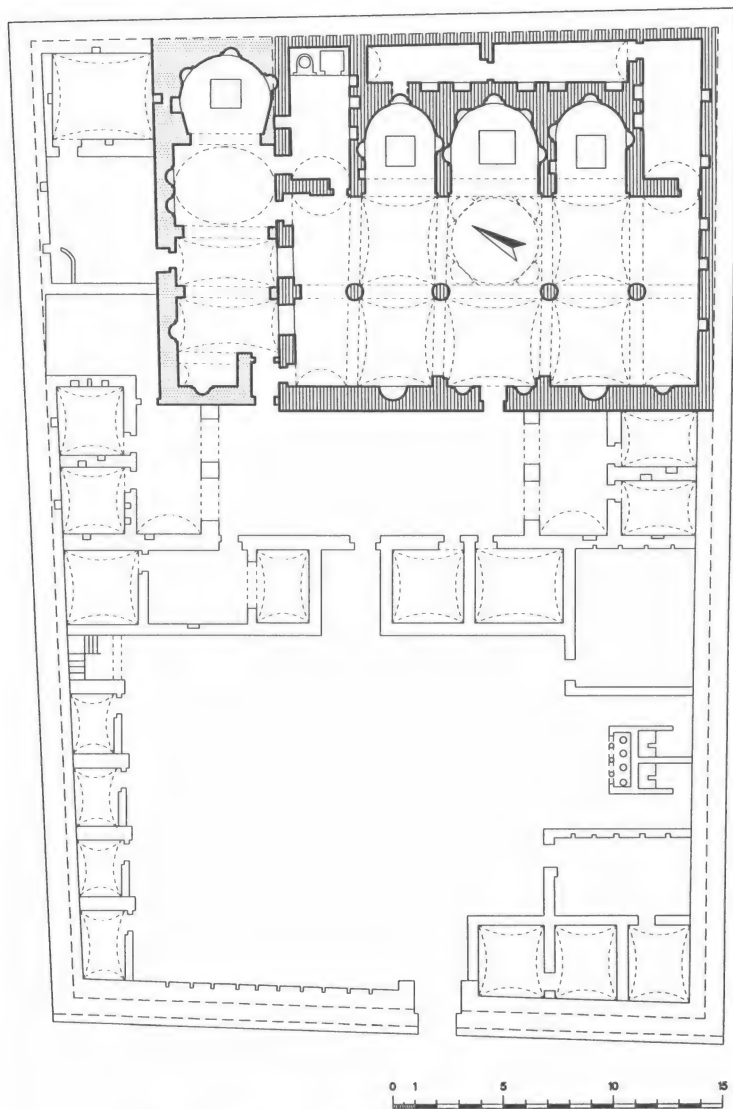
**Dayr al-Shuhadā' (The Monastery of the Martyrs)**





(to McNally, "Transformations...")

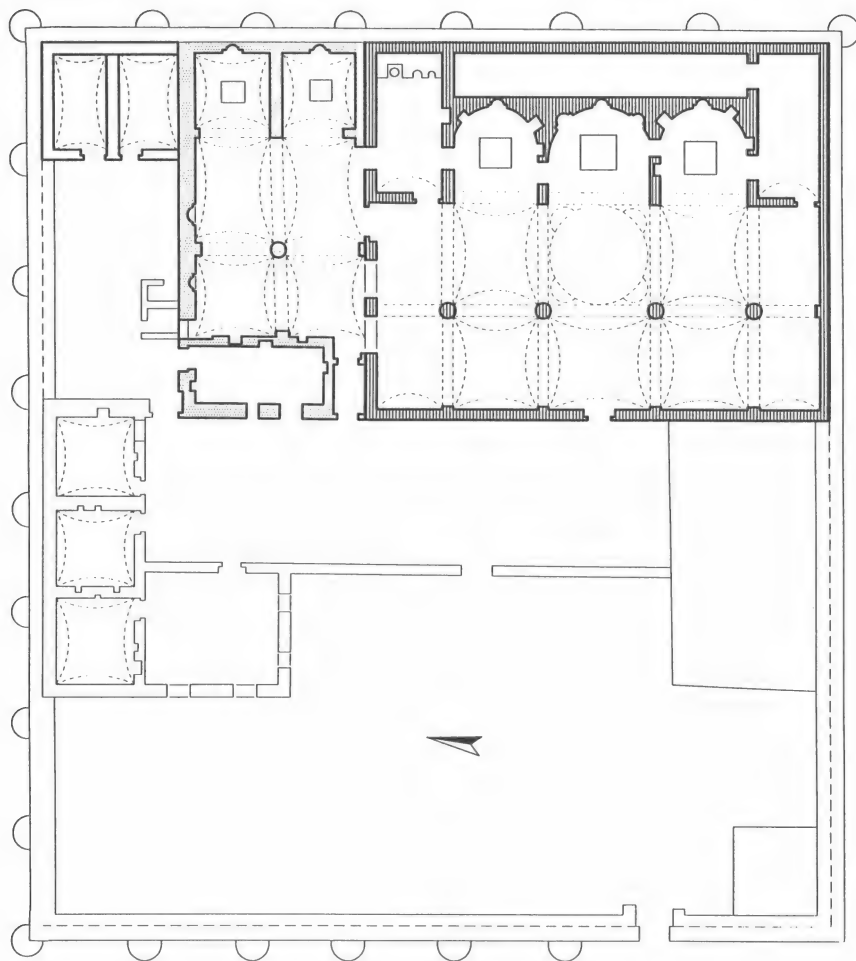
Plate 15



Dayr al-Malāk Mikhāʿil (St. Michael)

**Plate 16**

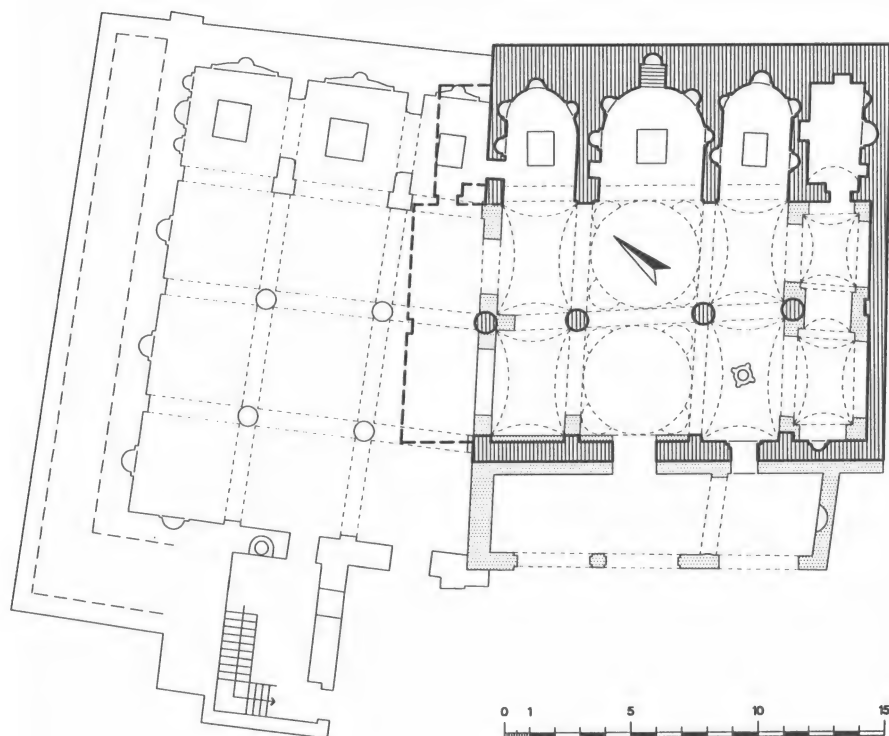
**(to McNally, "Transformations...")**



**Dayr al-‘Adhra’ (The Virgin)**

(to McNally, "Transformations...")

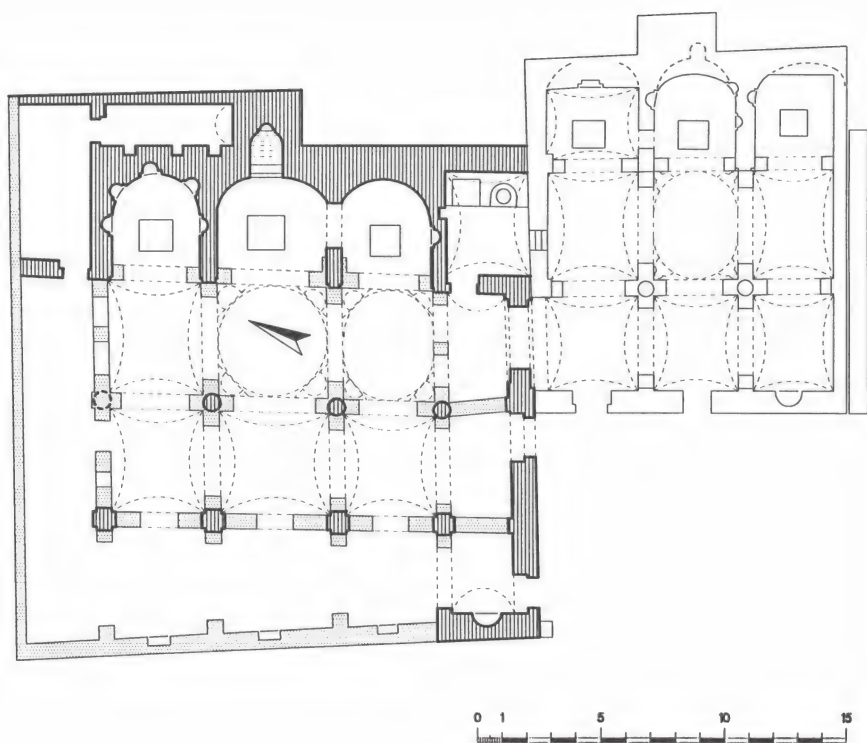
Plate 17



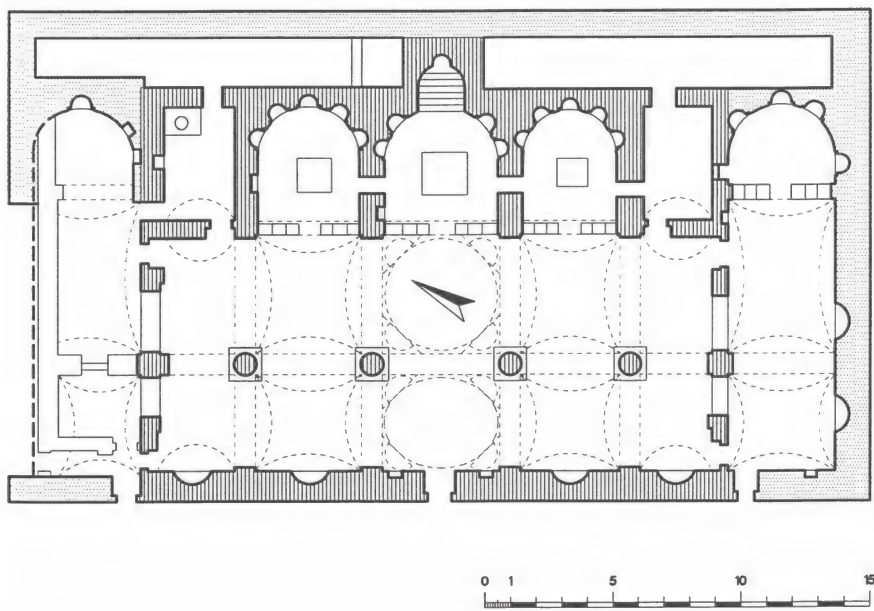
Abū Sayfayn (St. Mercurius)

**Plate 18**

**(to McNally, "Transformations...")**



**Sitt Dimyānah**



Dayr Mārī Jirjis (St. George)

## BOOK REVIEWS

Panagiota Sarischouli, ed., *Berliner Griechische Papyri. Christliche literarische Texte und Urkunden aus dem 3. bis 8. Jh. n. Chr.*, Wiesbaden 1995 (Serta Graeca; Band 3), Verlag Dr. Ludwig Reichert; x + 217 pp, 16 plates, ISBN 3-88226-824-7.

This volume presents the publication of 23 literary and documentary texts edited by Sarischouli (S.) as a dissertation at the Free University of Berlin in 1993/4. All the texts come from the Papyrussammlung des Aegyptischen Museums Berlin and the association of W. Brashear with the work as supervisor is a guarantee of its quality. The editorial standard is very high as is the quality of the discussion in the introductions and notes to the texts themselves. S. has an impressive familiarity with the Coptic as well as the Greek background to the texts which she presents. although, as one often finds with a work originating in a thesis, she tends sometimes to go for the bibliographical overkill. The publisher—a name which is not otherwise known to me—has done an excellent job in setting a difficult text.

The literary texts, 1-9, are all Christian, and all hitherto unknown with the exception of 9 (Hermas, *Vis.* III 6.4, 6.6). The texts are as follows:

### a) Unbekannte Texte

**1. Zwei christliche Texte.** Remains of a leaf from a codex with part of two different works in the same bookhand, dated by S. to A.D. iv/v; it is difficult to be precise, but perhaps the earlier end of that spectrum? Mention is made of the denial of Peter and the resurrection of Christ.

**2. Christliches Gebet mit Akklamationen.** Again from a codex, also in a bookhand of A.D. iv/v. Christ is hailed as παντοκράτωρ, εἰς

θεός, εἰς σωτήρ, κ.τ.λ. In the note on λευλευ (recto 2), another possibility which could be added is that this may be meant to represent the Aramaic words *eloi eloi lama sabachthani* said to have been spoken by Jesus on the cross: Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34.

**3. Heilige Thekla und Paese.** A codex leaf of A.D. v-early vi (again the hand could be earlier than this) with the remains of a hitherto unknown martyrology of Saint Thekla and her brother, written *transversa charta* on one side only; the brother is unnamed in the text but the mention of ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτῆς (18) leads S. to argue that this is the martyred brother and sister Paese and Thekla from Abusir, rather than the better known Thekla of the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*. It is somewhat strange to find the back blank unless this was the last page of the codex, but S. prefers that possibility (p. 33) to the thought that this may be only a letter after all; certainly the neatness and regularity of the hand suggest a literary text.

**4. Christlicher (gnostischer?) Text.** Assigned to late A.D. vi. Certain vocabulary elements (ἀπογνώσια [*add. lexx.*], ἀθυμίατος) and references to the Archangel (7) and γνῶσις σωτηρίας (9) help S. to make a case that this text is Gnostic in nature. But, as so often, certainty is impossible, as S. herself is careful to make clear.

**5. Marianische Troparia.** A.D. vi/vii, assigned. On the front, along the fibres, a *Troparion* of the Virgin Mary with a shortened paraphrase of Lk 1:40-44, the return of Mary to the house of her parents Zacharias and Elizabeth. On the back, a further reference to the Virgin Mary combined with a reference to the appearance of Gabriel to Daniel (cf. Daniel 9:20ff). The presence of some marks of musical notation in line 5 is noteworthy.

**6. Apokryphe Johannesapokalypse?** A.D. vii, assigned, written *transversa charta* on the back only. A search by S. of TLG and the language of this fragment rightly suggest an apocryphal account of the Second Coming.

**7. Darstellung des Seraphim vor dem Thron Gottes.** A page of an Hermopolite codex of A.D. vii/viii. On the front are fragments of a Christian hymn mentioning the seraphim before the throne of God: cf. Isaiah 6:2-3. On the back five lines of Coptic (not transcribed).

**8. Theotokion und andere christliche Hymnen.** A leaf of a codex, provenance unknown, also datable to A.D. vii/viii on palaeographical grounds, with remnants of Christian *troparia*..

b) Literarisch ueberlieferter Text

**9. Hermas, Vis.III 6.4 und 6.6.** A page of a codex of A.D. vi, also unknown provenance. As mentioned above, this is the only known Christian literary text.

Of the documentary texts, **10-19** are letters, varying in date from A.D. iv to A.D. vii/viii, and the remaining four are lists or inventories (**20-23**: A.D. iv to vi/vii). Only **13-15** and **18-19** are complete, the others being broken to a greater or lesser degree. Among the most noteworthy:

**10** is a fragmentary letter from Alypios to a *diastoleus* Maximos. Both parties are known from the Heroninos archive to which this text therefore constitutes an addendum. The subject matter concerns θεατρικῶ[ν ? ii 5, dramatic representations at Oxyrhynchus (ii 7).

**11** is an incomplete Christian letter of A.D. iv, urging an unnamed bishop to write in favour of a third party.

**12** is the upper part of a business letter of unknown provenance from one Hermeinos to a Nikandros (both unidentified) with instructions to provide a *centenarion* of lead to the ἐπικείμενος (the photo on pl. VII clearly shows that we must read τῷ ἐπικειμένῳ for τὰ ἐπικείμενα in line 3) for a ship and two ἄξονες for the repair of a new boat (reading κῆφους for κληροῦ in line 6: both these corrections have also been made independently by J. Gasco, reviewing S. in *CE* 71, 142 [1996] 361-4). Typically this raises as many questions as it solves since *axones* are otherwise associated with the animal-driven irrigation device known as a *sakkiheh*.

**14** is a letter exchanged between two members of the military on the question of provisions (7). Attributed to A.D. vi, it



contains an interesting reference to 'the impious Blemmyes' (10). For further bibliography on them see now R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 1993) 146-7, n. 190.

17 is the end of a letter ascribed to A.D. vii, with some very fulsome greetings from the writer Severos to his friend Eulogios. The δεσποτείαν of the latter (line 2) is perhaps better taken as the object of the preceding ἀσπάζομαι, rather than the following verbs παρακαλῶ καὶ εὐχομαι whose object probably lies concealed in the broken gap in the middle of the line; the photo is unfortunately too dark to venture any suggestion.

18 is a business letter attributed to the period from mid A.D. vii to viii; references in line 6 to Babylon, the new Arab capital of Egypt, and the *amir* confirm a date after 641. Line 3 attests the personal name Theologios for only the second time in the papyri. In line 1 S. discusses, only to reject the reading πανδουρίῳ in favour of πᾶν δουρίῳ (l. δωρίῳ). This seems strange in view of the context of strong reproach in which the word occurs. Admittedly πανδουρίζω, 'play the lute (*pandoura*),' is exceedingly rare, but we might translate ἁμαρτίας τοι[αύ]τας οὐδὲ [πα]ράσχη ἢ ὑμετέρα θεοφύλακτος ἀδελφότης ἐὰν τὰ τέκνα πανδουρίῳ, ἵνα μὴ εἶπω ἄλλο τί ποτε as '(Even) if it were (your own) children playing the lute, not even your God-defended brotherly nature would allow such mistakes, to say no more about it,' i.e. such rank incompetence, in business in the context of this letter, is totally inexcusable even by someone as kind hearted as you are.

20-23 are inventories, mainly late in date, listing clothing or household items. Many of the items mentioned present considerable difficulties of interpretation and the copious notes which S. has provided by way of explanation, drawing together Coptic as well as Greek material, are a rich source of lexicographical information which will be much appreciated by future editors.

In addition to the usual indices, S. provides a list of works cited (pp. 193-205) and most usefully an Index rerum papyrologicarum (pp. 215-7). All the texts are illustrated in the 16 plates at the end of the volume; although we are told that they have been reduced in

size, it is irritating that we are not told by how much. But that is a minor niggle about what is a most impressive debut volume. It is just a pity that some of the texts hardly seem substantial enough to merit the care and erudition which S. has lavished upon them. Now that her dissertation is out of the way, we expect great things from her.

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Worp, K.A. *Greek Papyri from Kellis: I (P.Kell.G.) Nos. 1-90*. In collaboration with J. E. G. Whitehorne, and R. W. Daniel. Oxford: Oxbow Books; 1995. xi + 281 pages + [79 unnumbered] plates. (Dakhleh Oasis Project Monographs and Reports 3 [Oxbow Monographs 54]). ISBN: 0 946897 97 2.

The present volume, the first to publish texts discovered during the excavations at the site of ancient Kellis (several further volumes have since appeared), includes the "publishable" Greek texts from area A of the excavation. This area includes three houses and one other building (its function is unclear, and the texts found in it offer no assistance in identification), drawings of which are included in the book. Unfortunately, there is no general map of the site to show either the location of area A in relation to the rest of the village, or to show the location of Kellis in Egypt.

It is clear that Kellis was a multi-lingual village, with many of its residents fully bilingual in Greek and Coptic. This is evident in the large number of Coptic documents found alongside Greek documents. There is also textual evidence. One Greek document (46) records, in the form of a letter, a loan of money; this style of document is Coptic. Furthermore, there is evidence of one resident, Tithoes, son of Petesis, who receives letters in Greek, but writes his own letters in Coptic.

The texts in this volume are linguistically and spatially limited, so they are not able to provide a full picture of life at ancient Kellis. Still, they do show some tantalizing bits, and many of the texts chosen for publication here are very interesting. When the Coptic (and other language) texts are viewed alongside those in Greek, there should be a very clear view into the life of this fourth century village.

The papyri and tablets in this volume are splendidly organized. All too often excavation papyri are published in order of discovery, or in some other random fashion. But Worp has arranged these first by find spot, and then thematically; texts are further grouped if they are related to certain parties. This will certainly aid scholars

who wish to interpret the site, provided that those who publish the other texts follow the same system of organization.

Because their find spots were so carefully recorded, the Kellis texts provide a rare opportunity to see the written remains of several houses on a room-by-room basis. I hope that, after all the different texts have been edited, a room-by-room concordance will be created by the editors, supplemented by comments on each room by the archaeologists. A cursory examination of these Greek texts shows, for example, that the texts in House 3 are limited almost exclusively to Rooms 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11.<sup>1</sup> Room 6, which appears by its location to be the main room in the house, contains, among other things, four loans of money (44, 45, 46, 47), two transportation receipts (51 and 52), and 10 letters (63, 64, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80). Room 8, directly behind Room 6, contains a mix of official papers (19a+b, 20, 21) and business documents (41, 49, 50, 55, 62), whereas Room 10, in the back section of the house where it did not open onto a main room, contained a mix of business papers and letters (25, 33, 35, 37, 53, 57, 67, 68, 78). Room 11, in the back corner of the house, contains three magical texts (83, 85a+b, 87). No conclusions can be drawn from these texts alone, but when they are combined with the Coptic texts, the uses of particular rooms may become clear.

An interesting feature of the texts excavated at Kellis is what Worp refers to as "wandering fragments." These are parts of the same document dispersed over a wide area, some in different rooms of the same house, and some even found in different houses. This phenomenon receives inadequate treatment in this volume and will require further investigation by those who will write the full interpretation of the site. While it is possible that some fragments were blown by the wind into another room (as Worp suggests), this introduces the possibility that all the texts were windblown to their excavated location. This problem of provenance makes a room-by-room analysis all the more important.

The volume includes a number of enticing texts. Among them are those relating to Tithoes, son of Petesis, a carpenter who lived in House 2 in the 360s. As mentioned above, Tithoes was

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<sup>1</sup> I include here only texts all of whose fragments were found in a single room.

Greek/Coptic bilingual. One of the texts in this group, reporting the sale of a slave, includes the curious claim that the mistress had nursed the slave as an infant.

There is a full discussion of the texts excavated from House 3. Speculating that the bulk of the Greek texts constitute something of a family archive, Worp has constructed a tentative family tree. Approximately half of the documents found in the house are not directly related to this family, but there may be some indirect connections, and Worp discusses these. This archive contains, among other things, petitions to officials, a Greek/Latin bilingual report of judicial proceedings (26), leases, contracts of sale, and money loans (leading to a thorough and useful discussion of higher-than-legal interest rates of the fourth century). 38a is unusual in that it discusses the gift of a plot of land, described in such great detail that it may be possible for archaeologists to locate this piece of land at the site. Text 48 records the manumission of a slave; documents of this sort are very rare.

Kellis preserves an unusually large number of wooden tablets, among them two remarkable codices, one containing an account book, the other containing texts of Isocrates (both published separately). Several other substantial wooden tablets are published in this volume, containing administrative texts, magical texts (including the only Greek horoscope written on a wooden tablet), and one school exercise. There is also a papyrus letter (67) in which the writer requests that the addressee send a wooden codex for his brother.

There are many letters published in the volume. Most of them are the ordinary requests for news or items or visits; some are business-oriented. One letter (63), though, is exceptional, in that its author is a Manichaean. The letters will no doubt be valuable sources of information when combined with the Coptic letters.

When publishing excavated papyri, the papyrologist often has to choose between expediency and care; the author makes clear in his introduction that a conscious choice was made to publish these texts quickly rather than carefully, and one must view the volume with that choice in mind. I myself am not altogether happy with this choice, although I recognize what a difficult one it is, since the history of papyrology is littered with texts which took decades to

see the light of day. Still, if one chooses to put what are essentially preliminary editions between the hard covers of a book, one gives those preliminary editions a certain *auctoritas* that they may not all deserve. The varying quality of the photographs, a problem endemic among excavated papyri, exacerbates the problem, because it is often very difficult to check the readings. Fortunately, corrections to the texts in Volume I have now appeared in Volume II, so the user of this volume would be well advised to check both.

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DIEM, WERNER. *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag; 1996. 2 volumes (vii + 288 pages; 59 plates). (Documenta arabica antiqua; v. 2). ISBN 3-447-03481-5.

DIEM, WERNER. *Arabische amtliche Briefe des 10. bis 16. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag; 1996. 2 volumes (ix + 411 pages; 70 plates). (Documenta arabica antiqua; v. 3). ISBN 3-447-03653-2.

Papyrologists and Islamic historians have long been aware of the rich and voluminous collection of Arabic papyrus and paper documents housed in the National Library of Austria in Vienna. Yet it is only over the past decade that the collection has been given the kind of scrutiny it deserves, due in large part to the efforts of Werner Diem. It is especially in Harrassowitz Verlag's series of volumes entitled "Documenta Arabica Antiqua" that Diem has made accessible the dizzying variety of Arabic documents housed in Vienna. Of the three volumes in the series published to date, all share in the same high quality of presentation, interpretation and scholarship. Each volume concerns itself with a separate "genre" of Arabic documents from throughout the medieval period. The first, published in 1995, dealt with commercial letters.<sup>1</sup> The two volumes under review here (volumes 2 and 3) deal with private letters (9th to 15th centuries) and official correspondence (10th to 16th centuries), respectively.

As with the first volume of the series, these two volumes share a clear and rational system of organization and presentation that make them among the most "user-friendly" volumes of Arabic papyri around. Individual documents are presented according to the same formula throughout: a capsule description, followed by technical details of the document (registration number, size, date, etc.) and a description of the document itself. This is followed by a longer description of the text, usually with some attempt at providing a context or elucidating broader historical conclusions. After this introductory material, Diem provides an edition of the

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<sup>1</sup> Werner Diem, *Arabische Geschäftsbriefe des 10. bis 14. Jahrhunderts* (Documenta Arabica Antiqua 1), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995.



Arabic text, followed by a German translation and commentary of particular details of vocabulary, grammar or usage. In addition to the thorough bibliographies, these volumes also offer the standard range of glossaries, chronological indices, and indices of names, toponyms, and even rhymes. Volume 3 also offers an index of signatures. Each volume of text is accompanied by a separate plates volume, providing a black-and-white photograph for each of the published documents. In general, the quality of the plates is high.

The high standards and utility of these volumes are thus not in question. It remains only to point out some of the more remarkable documents to be found in these volumes, a subjective and by no means exhaustive effort. Given the particular topics of each volume, one might think that social historians will gravitate toward the private letters of volume 2, while political historians will want to rifle through the official documents of volume 3. In fact, each volume has much to offer Islamic historians, whatever their bailiwick.

Each volume is divided into categories of documents cohering around one quality, generally their function or intended audience. For example, volume 2, on private letters, is sub-divided into sections on letters to family members, letters to friends and colleagues, letters to social superiors, and so on. These documents range from shopping lists to deeply personal letters, and so the volume is filled with the minutiae of daily life in medieval Egypt, as one would expect. It is also worth pointing out here that volume 2 contains a number of letters that are either composed by women, written to women or about women, a valuable body of information for a topic that is too often dominated by formal literary sources. One noteworthy letter between two men (number 24) is a vivid record of the ties of friendship and loyalty that could exist between members of Muslim and Christian elites.

Volume 3 offers an insight into the inner workings of a range of medieval Egyptian polities and the nitty-gritty of chancery practice. This volume will thus make interesting reading when taken alongside the more formal *inshā'* handbooks of chancery style. It contains decrees to the general populace, decrees to lower ranking officials, formal correspondence between officials, miscellaneous formal correspondence, requests to authorities, letters to judges and subpoenas. Worthy of note here is a curious workbook of a 13th

century chancery official (number 80), which allowed its owner to practice the many protocols and complicated formulaic phrases necessary to his trade. Also of note is a group of edicts issued from the office of the otherwise unknown Mamluk official Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Azkā al-Malakī al-Nāṣirī, who flourished circa 1300 (numbers 50-56). These might profitably be studied as a unit, or with those of his sons that follow (numbers 57-59).

In brief, Diem has produced efficient, accessible volumes of a wide range of important medieval Egyptian documents. The three volumes published so far come highly recommended, and only future volumes in the series are likely to surpass them in quality.

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Lapp, Günther. *The Papyrus of Nu (BM EA 10477)*. With a contribution by T. Schneider. Catalogue of the Books of the Dead in the British Museum, 1. London: British Museum Press, 1997. 91 pages + 88 plates. ISBN 0-7141-1902-4. £45.00.

The complex of Egyptian funerary texts commonly known as the *Book of the Dead* is perhaps the most commonly encountered text in Egyptian. Despite its importance and ubiquity, though, there remains much work to do on the *Book of the Dead*, for which there is, for example, no comprehensive modern edition of all of the individual "chapters" in the corpus. In recent years, there have been a number of important publications of the *Book of the Dead*, both of individual manuscripts and of wider studies of this funerary corpus. The present volume represents the first complete publication of an important early manuscript from this corpus—the *Book of the Dead* of Nu, an official of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Although long known from inadequate and incomplete typographical transcriptions of its text, the present edition provides a full facsimile of this important papyrus, along with valuable notes. Not only does this volume provide scholars with better access to specific texts from the papyrus and the elegant cursive hieroglyphic hand in which it was written, but the publication also gives a sense of how the manuscript functions as a whole. The present volume is an auspicious beginning for the new British Museum series of publications of their important collection of *Book of the Dead* papyri.

The present volume begins with an exhaustive introduction to the papyrus, its physical makeup, dating and publication history. Nu's name and titles are discussed at some length. Of special interest is the editor's discussion of the "chapters" from the *Book of the Dead* included in Nu's papyrus, and their ordering. Although Egyptologists conventionally refer to individual texts within the *Book of the Dead* as numbered "chapters," the numbering and sequence is based on later manuscripts when this was standardized in the Saite Period. *Book of the Dead* manuscripts from the Third Intermediate Period and earlier show great variation in the number and order of "chapters." Scholars have all too often assumed that

the ordering of chapters within a particular manuscript was partly or entirely random and of no significance. The editor of the present volume, in line with the recent work of Irmtraut Munro (among others), suggests otherwise, pointing out sequences of chapters that show thematic unity and that are also attested in other manuscripts. The editor concludes this section with a useful summary of the contents of the usual opening and closing sequences found in New Kingdom *Book of the Dead* papyri (pp. 48-49). The editor further discusses the mechanics of text and vignettes—features of the writing, spelling and formatting of the manuscript and vignettes—along with a summary of how Nu's papyrus reflects the earlier funerary corpus, the *Coffin Texts*. A brief appendix by Thomas Schneider (pp. 61-63) discusses the relationship of the writing of Nu's name with the writings of the place-name Nineveh in hieroglyphs. This is followed by a series of concordances of the contents of Nu's papyrus.

The bulk of the volume is taken up by a complete photographic reproduction of the papyrus of Nu: 88 black-and-white plates that show this well-preserved manuscript in its entirety, along with four color plates of all of the illustrations in the papyrus. Rubrics in the text, which do not always show up entirely in the black-and-white photographs, are also typographically reproduced in an appendix (pp. 73-88). Thus the entire *Book of the Dead* papyrus of Nu is now finally available for study. The reproduction of the entire text in facsimile provides invaluable palaeographical comparanda for cursive hieroglyphs, in addition to making the full text of Nu's papyrus (with its often superior readings) available at last. Moreover, the full facsimile gives a sense of the papyrus as a whole—an important but often overlooked aspect of these papyri is how they function as complete manuscripts, rather than just individuals texts and illustrations.

*The Papyrus of Nu* is an excellent production on all counts, and the reviewer looks forward to future volumes in the British Museum series. Both editor and press are to be congratulated for the high quality of their efforts.

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Hasitzka, Monika R. M. *Ein neues Archiv koptischer Ostraka. Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, 20. Wien: In Kommission bei Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 1995. 51 pages + 17 plates. ISBN 3-85119-260-5.

The present volume publishes a group of 33 Coptic ostraca in Vienna. All but two are documents relating to deliveries that comprise an interrelated group. Taken individually, these texts are not particularly impressive, but treated as an archive they yield interesting information. Moreover, the book under review is an unusually extensive publication of Coptic documentary ostraca, texts that tend not to get such thorough treatment. Indeed, the present volume could profitably be taken as a model for future publications of groups of Coptic ostraca.

After a brief introduction to the products, measures, names, places, formulae and dates in the ostraca, the editor presents the ostraca themselves in transcription, translation and with extensive commentary. Most of the texts in the present collection record deliveries with a standard formula beginning  $\omega\iota\text{NE NCA}$ —"inquire after." The editor dates these delivery records to the eighth century on the basis of palaeography. Many similar texts have been published in the past, but the formulae and contents in the Vienna ostraca vary somewhat from those of the previously known texts. Of those with dates, the majority of the Vienna pieces (1-21) were written within a few days of each other in the month of Phamenoth, first indiction, and concern various types of fish in specific kinds of containers. One order (22), inscribed in Phaophi of the first indiction, is for sacks of wheat, while the remaining order (23-30) lack dates and include orders for fish and wheat. Another ostrakon (31) is too abraded to read, but clearly seems to have belonged to the same group and is likely to have been the same type of document. These ostraca were purchased, and the editor does not attempt to assign a provenance. Recent work by S. J. Clackson, however, suggests that these ostraca, like other  $\omega\iota\text{NE NCA}$  ostraca

(including pieces from Cledat's excavations in the Louvre), come from Bawit.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the ostraca (1, 3-6, 8, 10, 13, 24, 27) are for deliveries of ⲱⲗⲁⲗ in jars. The editor suggests that this is "gepöckelten Fisch," noting the parallels ⲗⲓⲗ, ⲗⲓⲣ "salted/pickled fish" and ⲗⲙⲗ "fish," and the related deliveries of other kinds of fish (ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲭⲉ [ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲭⲓⲟⲛ] and ⲗⲁⲃⲙⲥ) in the Vienna ostraca. As fresh fish are unlikely to last in jars for any great length of time, dried or pickled fish would be much more likely for the present texts. But ⲱⲗⲁⲗ is left in Coptic in the translations of individual texts because of the uncertainty. I would suggest the following in support of the editor's understanding of the term.

Only one attestation of ⲱⲗⲁⲗ is cited in Crum's *Coptic Dictionary* (615b), in an unpublished documentary text in which six ⲱⲗⲁⲗ are to be sent, and Crum does not attempt a definition. Westendorf (*Koptisches Handwörterbuch* 342) tentatively suggests "Holzriegel" based on a similar word in Arabic, but it is unlikely that wooden objects would be shipped in jars. A similar word in Crum (615b), ⲱⲗⲓⲗ, also known from a single attestation, seems to be a component of a place-name, but there is no clue as to its meaning. Coptic ⲗ for ⲓ (and vice versa) is known in documentary texts (Kahle, *Bala'izah* I:60, 75), and the particular sequence of consonants makes a relationship between ⲱⲗⲁⲗ and ⲱⲗⲓⲗ likely.

Jaroslav Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* 263, suggests that ⲱⲗⲓⲗ is derived from the Demotic *sdyl*, written with an animal determinative. He cites Erichsen, *Demotisches Glossar* 483, which gives a single attestation of this word from the bilingual magical papyrus (PGM/PDM lxi), first published by Bell, Nock and Thompson, (*Magical Texts from a Bilingual Papyrus in the British Museum*). In his commentary on the relevant passage (*w<sup>c</sup> qs n sdyl*—"a bone of a *sdyl*," VIII:2=PDM 116), Thompson (p. 17) notes that the determinative looks more like a lizard than a fish, and tentatively takes the term as "lizard." Thompson was probably also influenced by the use of lizards in the Greek portions of the same

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Clackson will discuss these texts in her forthcoming book *Coptic and Greek Texts relating to the Hermopolite Monastery of Apa Apollo*, to appear in the Griffith Institute Monographs series.

papyrus (PGM lxi 39-71) and the importance of lizards (but not necessarily their bones) in the magical papyri.

This possible Demotic antecedent for  $\omega\Delta\iota\lambda/\omega\Delta\lambda\lambda$  may not seem very useful, since it is, of course, extremely unlikely that the jars delivered in the Coptic ostraca in the present volume were full of lizards, fresh or preserved. A closer examination of the writing of Demotic *sdyl*, however, suggests that the Demotic word is indeed for a kind of fish. Comparison of the writing of the determinative of *sdyl* with the late writings of lizard and fish determinatives shows much greater similarity with the fish (note especially G. Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie III* 254, 256-7 from Ptolemaic/Roman manuscripts) than the lizard (see Möller, III 240). Taking into account the Coptic usage, one might render the Demotic passage "the bone of a dried/pickled fish," not a surprising ingredient for a magical spell. At any rate, I would suggest that this relationship between the  $\omega\Delta\lambda\lambda$  of the Vienna ostraca and Demotic *sdyl* is relatively certain, and that the Demotic writing does in fact reinforce Hasitzka's understanding of  $\omega\Delta\lambda\lambda$  as (dried or pickled) fish of some sort.

Texts 32-33 in the present volume do not, apparently, have any relationship to the other ostraca. 32 is described as possibly an unidentified literary text, perhaps related to the Old Testament. It is a cryptic ostrakon, giving numbers of troops (100 and 49?), blessed ones (2) and messengers (19). As the editor points out, the numbers do not seem to help with the identification. Rather than relating this to the Old Testament, though, I would suggest that the text relates to a martyrdom—the different categories would fit with the life of a military martyr, for example. 33 is a letter to a woman, inquiring about a garment ( $\varrho\Delta\iota\tau\epsilon$ ) and a blanket ( $\lambda\omicron\tau\iota\zeta$ ), possibly purchased for a solidus. The editor tentatively dates this text to the sixth century—earlier than any of the other texts in the volume and unrelated to them.

For the specialist in Coptic ostraca, this volume is a rare treat, easily the most thorough publication of a group of such texts in many years. The editor's expertise in editing Coptic texts comes in handy, but this book goes beyond simple text editions to analyze the ostraca in the context of the specific genre of documents they contain. The commentary on the individual ostraca and the archive



as a whole covers the many issues raised by this archive and related texts in other collections. The texts are exhaustively indexed and cross-referenced. The inclusion of photographs of all 33 ostraca that comprise the archive is a positive luxury—this is how Coptic ostraca *should* be published, but all too rarely are.

Coptic papyrologists are indeed fortunate in the continuing efforts of the editor of the present volume, who continues to turn out exemplary editions of Coptic texts in the Vienna collections, while preparing the invaluable *Koptisches Sammelbuch*. We are all deeply in her debt.

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